University of Alberta

The Experience of Congregational Singing: An Ethno-Phenomenological Approach

by

Gordon Alban Adnams

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Secondary Education

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 2008

Library and Archives Canada

Published Heritage Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-45390-2
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-45390-2

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

Abstract

Congregational singing in many Canadian evangelical churches has undergone a significant shift. Organs have been replaced by guitars and drums; hymnals are left in the rack in favour of text on a screen; hymns are out and compact pop-style worship songs are in. These changes have been welcomed by some worshippers but have caused consternation in others as local congregations have struggled with musical preferences and worship styles – a process that has often resulted in a "worship war." Some congregations have remained musically traditional; some wholly embrace the new Praise and Worship songs, while others offer separate services for each musical taste. As well, some churches have opted to use both traditional and contemporary songs in one service. This dissertation asks, "What is the experience of congregational singers as they sing both traditional and contemporary worship songs in a stylistically blended worship service?"

Using hermeneutic phenomenology, modes of being-in-song-in-singing are explored, together with a musical ethnography that examines the context of the singing – a Canadian congregation whose blended worship services have choruses accompanied by a guitar-based ensemble and hymns sung with an organ and piano. The phenomenological and ethnographic insights are subsequently discussed, using the paradigm of authenticity as articulated by philosopher Charles Taylor. The dissertation concludes that blended musical worship is a phenomenon that challenges individuals to examine their notions of authenticity in worship. If blended worship is to be sustained, the self-centered authenticity prevalent in popular culture and most clearly seen in the

experience of those who prefer the contemporary style of worship singing, needs to shift to a more inclusive authenticity that encompasses what Taylor calls a "horizon of significance" outside the self. When singers accept the challenge to grow beyond expressive individualism, they may be able to value and embrace a diverse church community with its differences in musical preference.

To my wife, Louise,

whose loving patience, support and encouragement

made this project possible.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction 1

Congregational Singing in Canada 1

Some Definitions 4

Evangelical 4

Blended worship 6

Worship style 7

How I Came to This Study 9

The Research Question 14

The Setting: Eldridge Baptist Church 17

Fieldwork (Method) 18

Phenomenology of congregational singing 18

Ethnomusicology 21

Analysis of Fieldwork Data (Method) 24

Phenomenological writing 24

Ethnomusicological inquiry 25

Phenomenology and ethnomusicological inquiry 28

Chapter 2 – Historic Aspects of Congregational Singing in the Evangelical Tradition ... 32

The Tension Between Words and Music in Song and Singing 40

Singing In a Social Context 46

The Influence of Popular Song and Culture 52

Chapter 3 – Facilitating Congregational Singing at Eldridge Baptist Church 58
The Significance of Past Pastoral Leadership: Control, Influence, Delegation 59
Present Musical Leadership: Sensitive Collaboration 64
Choosing Congregational Song: A Delicate Balance 72
Ingredients for a Blended Sunday Service: "Hymns" and "Worship Team" 84
Conclusion 104
Chapter 4 – Modes of Congregational Singing: "Being-in song-in-singing." 106
Joining In Song 106
"Just Singing" 111
"Un-minded" singing 112
"Meaningless" words 114
"Dispassionate" singing 117
"Into" Singing 119
"Overwhelmed" 122
"Uplifted" 128
"Gesturing" 132
"Really worshipping" 138
Conclusion 148
Chapter 5 – Congregational Singing: Authenticity and Performance 150
The Congregational Singer 151
To sing or not to sing 152
Individuality and originality 165
Me, us, and "horizons of significance." 173

Worship, words, hymns and choruses 187
The Musical Leaders and Accompanists 209
Originality and contextualization 209
Musical leaders, congregational singers and technology 212
Conclusion 229
Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study 231
Method 231
A Blended Service 233
Congregational Songs and Singing 235
Ideas of Worship 239
The Use of Technology 241
Chapter 7 – Five Theses 245
References 250
Appendices 257
Ethics Review 257
Overview of research project 257
Procedures for compliance with the U of A standards 259
Covering letter to participants 262
Research consent form 263
Under-age participant covering letter 264
Under–age participant research consent form 265
Covering letter to the church board 266
Church board research consent form 268

Letter to Christian Copyright Licensing International 269

Interview questions and procedures 270

The Interviewees 271

List of Tables

Table 1: Most frequently sung titles in 32 services 83

Table 2: Frequency of exposures in 32 services 83

List of Figures

Figure 1: Participation and performance 160

Figure 2: Lyrics and chord changes 211

Figure 3: Lyrics and music from a hymnal 219

Figure 4: The primary performance relationships of worship 228

Chapter 1– Introduction

> Surely people have every right to want to sing or hear music they like, whether in church or in heaven. Most Christians today would feel that there would be something wrong about asking anyone to attempt to glorify and enjoy God – which the Psalms, Augustine, and Calvinist confessions all describe as our purpose – while employing only music that seems alien to them, or inferior, or markedly inappropriate for worship. But how can people ever hope to discover music they could enjoy together in heaven, when it is increasingly difficult for them to find music they can enjoy together in a single church on earth? (Brown, 2000, p. 165)

Congregational Singing in Canada

In Canada, approximately 20% of people over 15 years of age attend a religious service every week ("Statistics Canada/Analysis Series/Religions in Canada", 2001) where, in most cases, community singing is a central part of the faith-based worship activity. What is sung, how it is sung, why and when it is sung – all these considerations are infused with personal and cultural values and significances.

A Christian church building is one of the few places in modern life that regularly resonates with the sound of people singing together. This communal music making is such an important part of religious experience that when some researchers (Kropf & Nafziger, 2001) asked people from several Mennonite communities, "What would you do

if someone decided that from here on out there would be no more singing in worship?" their answers were quick and from the gut:

> "Do you mean, what would I do besides leave?"
>
> "It would rob us of our church. We couldn't go to a church that didn't sing. Singing is the glue that holds worship together."
>
> "I'd dry up. I would feel like something is being squeezed out of me. Even as you ask the question, it's like someone putting a vice on me and draining everything out of me. I'm even getting short of breath now. I wouldn't last long." (p. 25)

Congregational singing seems to be significant to many worshippers. However, within the broad, evangelical church tradition (see Some definitions, p. 4) that forms a significant proportion of Canadian Protestant groups (Bibby, 1995; Van Ginkel, 2003a), congregational song has been radically altered since the early 1990s. The changes seem to be based on many assumptions concerning musical style, preference, personal and cultural relevance and implementation has resulted in discontent and dislocation among some congregants and great rejoicing among others. New songs, characterized by popular styles of text, music and instrumentation – guitars, electronic keyboard and drums – have in many cases superceded the traditional chorale style hymns and revivalist songs accompanied by organ and piano. In many cases, hymnbooks have been replaced by projection of text and choirs have disappeared, giving way to self-sufficient, amplified, small vocal ensembles fronting the band. The complete ensemble is often called the "Worship Team." This shift in musical expression has generated widespread discussion and, in many cases, contention and serious division among church members. These changes have not been confined to conservative, evangelical churches; they have affected

all major Protestant denominations in North America (Bibby, 2002; Witvliet, 1997), as well as the Roman Catholic community (Day, 1990).

The most recent changes that have taken place in congregational song within the evangelical churches are clearly demarcated by boundaries created by generational preferences in music and style; "religious symbols and styles are a means by which a group, including a generational cohort, attempts to differentiate itself from another by means of a distinctive religious style" (Carroll & Roof, 2002, p. 10). More specifically, Carroll and Roof (2002) recognize that the "choice of liturgy and music is more than a preference; it is a symbolic expression of identity and of religious meaning implicit within that identity" (p.10). These deeper meanings which are being created or lost seem to depend on which generation has the most influence in any given congregation.

The so-called "Baby Boomers," those born in the 1945 to mid 1960's, are credited with beginning this liturgical revolution (Hamilton, 2001; Hustad, 1998; Morgenthaler, 1995; Romanowski, 2000; Wren, 2000). Their apparent consumerist approach to worship music has spawned "the new reality of congregational singing in America. All over the country, churches are customizing worship-music styles for particular demographic groups" (Hamilton, 1999, p. 29). In this accommodating approach in evangelical worship practice, Canada does not differ from the U.S. experience (Posterski, 2002).

Some Definitions

Evangelical

The British historian David Bebbington has identified the key ingredients of evangelicalism as

> conversionism (an emphasis on the 'new birth' as a life-changing religious experience), biblicism (a reliance on the Bible as ultimate religious authority), activism (a concern for sharing the faith), and crucicentrism (a focus on Christ's redeeming work on the cross). (Noll, 1994, p.8)

Many Christian denominations call themselves evangelical and adhere to these four theological emphases. However, being evangelical is not restricted to people who attend any particular group of churches within Canada. Many individuals have evangelical convictions but attend churches of a variety of denominations which would not call themselves evangelical. An Ipsos-Reid survey executed in 2003 (Van Ginkel, 2003a) found that 19% of Canada's population could be classified as evangelical: 12% Protestant and 7% Catholic. The set of statements posed in this poll varied slightly from those outlined by Bebbington.

> The survey demonstrated that, on the basis of six key indicators, 19 percent of Canadians (12 percent Protestant and 7 percent Catholic) are "Evangelicals." The indicators for Evangelicalism were determined by respondents' *agreement* with the following statements:
>
> *1. I believe that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God provided the way for the forgiveness of my sins;*
>
> *2. I believe the Bible to be the word of God and is reliable and trustworthy; and*

3. I have committed my life to Christ and consider myself to be a converted Christian.

To be called an "Evangelical" the survey respondents also needed to *disagree* with the statements that:

4. The concept of God is an old superstition that is no longer needed to explain things in these modern times; and

5. In my view, Jesus Christ was not the divine Son of God.

The sixth determining factor of Evangelicalism was weekly church attendance. (Van Ginkel, 2003b)

Browne (2001) reports that Canadian evangelicals do not consider themselves to be fundamentalists. The term "fundamentalist" has historic references to a narrowly-defined Christianity, the doctrines of which include Bebbington's (and Ipsos-Reid's) essentials of evangelicalism. However, the narrowness of Christian fundamentalism does not encompass the broader range of evangelical beliefs and practices that surround the core that the surveys articulate. Browne (2001) notes that, in recent times, fundamentalist has become more of a sociological term that is commonly applied to religious extremists from all faith groups who seem to be motivated as much by politics as religion. Even the term "conservative" is problematic when applied to evangelicals in the Canadian context, especially when "conservative" is used as a synonym of "evangelical" and connotes a complex of religious/political/social orientations. The reference is probably more accurately descriptive of a faction within the political landscape of the United States.

Yet Canadian evangelicals are not simply clones of their American cousins. Historical studies and sophisticated polling agree that the pattern of recent

> Canadian evangelical involvement in public life differs markedly from the American one.
>
> The Canadian pattern of voting in federal elections is consistent in this respect: Canadian evangelicals vote generally in the same proportions as the country at large. Perhaps as many as 10 percent more of them lean to Conservative than does the country as a whole. But the best numbers indicate that in the last federal election perhaps half of the regularly churchgoing evangelicals voted Conservative. This is hardly a monolith of right-wing allegiance. (Stackhouse, 2005)

The indication is that pluralities of social and political beliefs are held by Canadian evangelicals in addition to Bebbington's basic theological core, further underscoring the complex nature of the label "evangelical."

Blended worship

In the common parlance of evangelical worship, songs are categorized as either "traditional" or "contemporary," neither term being adequately explained, but nevertheless, understood. In a church that offers a "blended" worship service, it is expected that both these categories of songs will be represented. The traditional materials are normally selected from a hymnal and referred to as "hymns" and the contemporary songs are gleaned from a variety of mostly media-based sources – CD's, tapes, video tapes, DVD's as well as published collections. They are referred to as "choruses."

In a blended worship style, both types are presented in differing proportions and musical formats that varies from church to church. Therefore, blended as a category of

worship style is locally defined in its practise and musical outworking. Taken as a whole, the musical materials used in worship are assumed meaningful to the entire congregation, given that some will prefer certain styles to others. A blended worship format allows all ages to experience a broader range of song material than that of exclusively contemporary or traditional, thus their singing experience is enlarged. In the 2001 version of a recent ongoing survey conducted by the American evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* (LaRueJr, 2001) it was found that "the biggest change in church worship music is not the switch to contemporary music, but the incorporation of contemporary music into traditional services." In the update to this research, LaRue Jr. (2004) noted that "there is a surge in the use of contemporary music with a corresponding drop in traditional. Today, churches are evenly grouped in each category: 37% blended, 32% contemporary, and 31% traditional." I have found no such survey of Canadian churches.

Worship style

The phrase "worship style" refers to the way in which a worship service is constructed and executed and is related to the musical content and manner in which it is presented. Evangelical churches have not been restricted by their history to any particular form of worship and, as such, have been free to evolve worship forms to meet any perceived need or end. During the more than 25 years that I have led worship services in evangelical churches, I have personally experienced and directed what have become known as "traditional," "contemporary" and "blended" worship styles, this nomenclature being obviously indicative of the musical content.

A strictly traditional style of worship will use traditional musical selections. In its execution, there is a distinct separation between the elements of the worship service, and each one might be announced by the worship leader. Typically, every hymn has a clear start, the accompanying keyboard instrument – piano or organ or both together – giving an introduction while the congregation finds the appropriate page in their hymnals. Each verse of the hymn ends with a slight slowing of the tempo and a small break before continuing to the next verse. At the end of the hymn, another worship activity such as a prayer or a scripture reading might be offered. This variety continues until the time for preaching, the singing having been interspersed with spoken elements or special music (choir or solo song). After the preaching, another hymn or prayer usually closes the service.

In contrast, the model of contemporary style, also referred to as "Praise and Worship," presents mostly choruses as continuous music or "free-flowing praise" (Liesch, 2001). In its most developed form, the accompanying band or Worship Team provides a non-stop background of music throughout the time of musical worship activity. Over this, the leader might also offer short prayers of adoration, verses of scripture or verbal encouragements to enhance the worship atmosphere between the songs. The congregational singing is started ad libitum by the worship leader, coordinated with the backup band, and each song flows from one to the other, often with many repetitions of sections of the songs. (It is interesting to note that, to facilitate better planning and smooth transitions from song to song, most publications of music for this type of service offer indexes of the musical keys, tempo indications and topics of each song.) Between songs, no pauses are necessary to find the worship songs in a hymnal

because the texts are usually projected on a screen. This too facilitates the flow of the service.

Congregational singing can last from 10 to 45 minutes, depending on the church, and it is not unusual for the congregation to stand for most of this time. The singing will stop for the preaching and perhaps resume afterwards for a short while. There is a degree of improvisation in the accompaniment and worship leadership, allowing for some flexibility and perceived freedom of expression. In fact, this style has to be highly organized and well executed to be effective. The benefit derived from this format is that a state of worshipful feelings can be developed in the worshippers by the uninterrupted musical environment. This engendered emotional affect is central to the success of the contemporary style and is thought to be difficult to achieve within the stop and start format of the traditional service.

Both the contemporary and the traditional styles of worship are linked to their respective musical expressions, but can be successfully blended with proper preparation and careful rehearsal. The definition of "blended" offered by LaRue (2001) is the use of choruses within a traditional structure; however, it is not uncommon for a worship service in the contemporary style to include one or two hymns accompanied by the band as part of the flow of songs and therefore be called a blended service.

How I Came to This Study

In all of my many and varied musical experiences, my greatest desire has been to be a music educator within a church congregation, giving opportunity for worshippers to sing and play the best appropriate music with as much excellence as possible. To that

end, after some years as a performer and an educator in the school system and post-secondary institutions, in 1980, I accepted a position in a Baptist church in Toronto as the Minister of Music. I directed choirs and instrumental ensembles and planned the worship services. After serving this congregation for 7 ½ years, in 1988, I accepted an offer from a Baptist church in Edmonton.

The Edmonton congregation was growing and driven by space considerations, offered two services on Sunday mornings, one deemed contemporary and the other traditional. In 1993, the congregation relocated, having built a large new facility. I was given opportunity for significant input into the musical considerations for the building – acoustics, rehearsal space, sound system, organ, pianos – and, because space was no longer an issue, and people were comfortable with both contemporary and traditional songs, we offered one blended Sunday worship service.

All through these times of church employment, church music was changing, but my ideals were still in the direction of "high art" music while appreciating and encouraging all the styles of the evangelical tradition. During the mid '70s, many congregations, including mine, began to use folk-style settings of Scripture to supplement the normal repertoire of traditional gospel songs and hymns. I welcomed these and often led the congregation while playing my guitar. By the late '80s, Christian congregations in North America and much of the Western world were beginning to abandon these and all historic forms of congregational music for an entirely new way of conducting a worship service (Hamilton, 1999).

As previously outlined, the music of this new worship style consists of songs characterized by simple, popular styles of text, music and instrumentation. These Praise

and Worship choruses are accompanied by guitars, keyboard and drums and often completely replace traditional chorale-style hymns and revivalist songs accompanied by organ and piano. Hymnbooks are left in the rack in favor of the projection of text, and in many cases choirs disappear giving way to self-sufficient, amplified, small vocal ensembles fronting the band.

As the musical leader of the Edmonton church, I was under some pressure to follow the trend, especially as we continued to grow within the new building. I implemented some changes, but always with caution and care to be inclusive of both the traditional and contemporary expressions – a blended service. I arranged the contemporary song repertoire for an ensemble – the Chorus Band – which consisted of a basic rhythm section with a horn line of trumpets, saxophones or trombones. This ensemble accompanied the choruses, and the newly purchased digital organ and grand piano played for the hymns. I was able to maintain this balance for some years as the trend towards contemporary only continued to take hold in the larger world of North American church music.

In 1998, a decision was made that our church would again offer two different styles of worship services. The early time was given to what had been the blended style of the past six years, while the 11:00 am service was to be strictly contemporary. I was charged with the task of recruiting and training the personnel and guiding the planning for this new worship experience as well the earlier service. With much reservation, I did so, playing bass guitar and directing the musicians for the new service, but at great personal cost. I had too many questions about the cultural meanings of music, the dominance of the youth culture, consumerist values and the lack of solid research to

substantiate the changes. I had questions about the theological understandings of church (ecclesiology) as it intersects with the perceived necessity of offering differing worship styles, as well as doubts about my own philosophy and practise of music and worship. I asked many questions around these subjects, but I received from the church leadership what I considered pragmatic and unsatisfactory answers. After a year of personal, internal dissonance, I resigned and took a year off to find a new balance to my life.

In more recent times, still being involved in church music, I have been told stories that run parallel to my own experience of cultural changes within the present day churches. I have heard about pastors who, upon returning from worship conferences, begin to implement philosophies and techniques designed to change the nature of Sunday morning gatherings in ways thought to be relevant to the present culture. As a result, a "worship wars" erupts that too often has split churches. Many people leave their church home to join a congregation that reflects their musical values or tastes. Open hostilities have been experienced within some church communities as people try to work out their differences over music and worship style. Classically trained musicians have felt squeezed out as guitar players with little or no musical education have been given prime responsibility for congregational song. In contemplating these and similar scenarios, it became obvious to me that something significant is happening within the lives of many church-going people, and it centers on the experience of singing congregational songs.

In the fall of 2000, I returned to college teaching as an adjunct professor at Taylor University College in Edmonton, conducting the choral ensembles and teaching courses concerning worship practices. During that year, I sensed within me a growing need to find a place where I could find new ways of thinking about my questions and attempt to

answer them. While on this journey, I have had to confront and deal with my disappointment with the state of musical affairs in many North American evangelical churches. I began to realize that I now have a unique opportunity to step back from a decision-making role within the church and try to understand the issues in a new way.

Although my training has been in the conservatory tradition, my musical experience has included an enjoyment of and employment in popular music as a guitar player. I appreciate the best of the new worship songs as well as the best of the old and hold that the ideal situation in a church would be to do the same, not confusing Christian unity with musical uniformity. However, the findings of LaRue (2004) demonstrate that at present in the U.S. two-thirds of the churches surveyed have chosen either traditional or contemporary worship styles while only-one third are trying to blend their musical expressions. Many local churches that I have visited and know about have made similar mono-cultural choices, and I have come to a point where I am genuinely puzzled by the seeming necessity of polarized music practice.

With this in mind, I looked for a congregation that had put to rest the discussion of whether or not to create separated services to cater to perceived musical taste. Eldridge Baptist Church is this kind of congregation and has been ideal for an investigation into the experience of singing contemporary and traditional congregational songs as it seems to be done without rancor. I was not an outsider to many of the congregation, and, as such, I had no difficulty being accepted and trusted as a participant-observer; in fact I was made to feel very much at home during my time in the field.

With my knowledge of the dynamics of church life and evangelical culture, I have been able to appreciate the background and sensitivities that led to the decision to adopt a

blended worship style. I also recognized that the process of research held the potential for upsetting what may be a fragile balance in the feelings of the congregation. However, because I was known to the leadership of this particular church, they trusted me to conduct the necessary research with care and were confident that the congregation among whom I would be asking questions was secure with the decision to blend musical expression. From the leaders' perspective, the issues surrounding congregational song have officially been resolved; therefore, I would not cause a divisive debate by asking questions concerning the singing of choruses and hymns.

The Research Question

The so called "worship wars" have been a part of the religious landscape in North America for many years. This unfortunate term is used to describe the state of unrest that exists in many congregations as they attempt to work out the results of changes in music and worship style. It is interesting to note some of the themes of the discussion as encapsulated by the titles of a small sample of the many publications that have been produced that deal with various aspects of the subject: *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down* (Dawn, 1995), *Putting an End to the Worship Wars* (Towns, 1997), *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures in Congregations* (Carroll & Roof, 2002), *True Worship: Reclaiming the Wonder and Majesty* (Hustad, 1998), *The Triumph of the Praise Songs: How Guitars Beat Out the Organ in the Worship Wars* (Hamilton, 1999), and *America's Worship War* (York, 2003).

In an article appearing in *The American Organist* (May, 2000), J. D. Witvliet describes the general characteristics of contemporary worship music in the American

Megachurches (those with very large attendance, and that also exert significant influence on the broader evangelical church culture) and the resulting shift in the practice of congregational singing. He issues a challenge for future research, the spirit of which this project pursues.

> More work is needed on the level of social or cultural history. Work is needed that considers personal diaries to be as valuable a source as critical musical editions. How have hymns functioned in the lives of people who are not trained as musicians, theologians, or pastors? In what ways have previous musicians resolved perceived tensions between aesthetic excellence and accessibility? (Witvliet, 1997, p. 53)

Protestants have historically treasured singing as a central worship activity and although the present tensions seem to revolve around what is sung, I have yet to hear it suggested that a dramatic reduction or even elimination of the sung portions of a worship service could be a workable option to bring peace to the war. In fact, a central feature of the new movement, compared to traditional worship, is an increase of and dependence on singing as worship. It appears that singing itself is at the heart of the tensions outlined; the act of singing seems to be non-negotiable. Is there something to be learned about the actual experience of singing and singing together? Witvliet asks, how does the act of singing in worship services impact the lives of worshippers? This question needs to be addressed before exploring the issues surrounding the song type or style. It can be approached using phenomenology.

Phenomenology may be understood as "the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (van Manen,

1997, p. 10). In its simplest form, the phenomenological dimension of the research question of this study can be formulated as follows: "What is the nature of the phenomenon [congregational singing] as meaningfully experienced" (van Manen, 1997, p. 40)? However, evangelical congregations sing songs within traditions and in specific cultural contexts, and the context of worship seems to be significant to the singer. This empirical contextual aspect can be examined by employing the methods of ethnomusicology, which is primarily concerned with writing about the ways particular peoples (ethnos) make music, and what happens when people make music (Myers, 1992).

RESEARCH QUESTION – What is the phenomenology of the experience of singing together in worship, and how may a phenomenological understanding of congregational singing contribute to a musical ethnography of congregational singing within a specific faith community who employ blended song styles?

To address the main research question, the following sub-questions were explored:

Sub-Questions

1. As given in existing church music literature, what are some of the major understandings of and influences on the experience of congregational singing in the modern Protestant tradition? (Chapter 2)
2. In a specific church context, what are the main understandings and influences that shape and support the practice of congregational singing? (Chapter 3)
3. In the regular church services of a specific congregation, by what processes are the singing events chosen, structured and offered to the congregation? (Chapter 3)

4. How is congregational singing in worship actually experienced by the singer? (Chapter 4)
5. How do people experience different styles of song? Are there common themes? Are there thematic differences, and are they correlated with stylistic preference? (Chapter 5)
6. Given that congregational songs are chosen by musical leaders and that the songs consist originally of the words and tunes that the songwriters have offered as communal expressions, do the individual singing worshippers experience these songs as their own authentic expressions and true for themselves? If so, are there perceptible ways in which this is realized? What about the musical leaders; how do they deal with authenticity in style and performance? (Chapter 5)
7. How do congregational singers and musical leaders in a blended service relate to their experience of singing and performing to their ideas (theologies) and experiences of worship? (Chapter 5)

The Setting: Eldridge Baptist Church

The roots of the Eldridge Baptist Church congregation go back to 1912 when a small group of people, sponsored by a well-established Baptist church near the center of a western Canadian city, gathered in what was then that city's most south-central suburb. After WW I, the church grew and in the 1940s constituted itself as Brookfield Baptist Church. A new building was erected a few blocks away, and it was here that the church adopted a new name, Eldridge Baptist Church, to honour a missionary statesman, Dr. Fredrick Eldridge, after his death in 1952. In 1963, lots were purchased less than a mile

to the south, and a year later the building of the present sanctuary began. In January 1965, the congregation moved into its new place of worship, which was expanded in 1973 to include meeting rooms for social and educational activities. The church continues to gather in these facilities, and during the period of my research, averaged a weekly attendance of 150-160 people.

Every Sunday morning at 11:00, the people gather for worship and are offered two distinct types of song: a group of two or three choruses accompanied by a guitar-based ensemble and two or three songs taken from the hymnal, accompanied by the organ and piano. This setting was chosen because some years ago the congregation engaged in the discussion of whether or not to offer two styles of worship services and decided for a blended style. Another attractive aspect of the present congregation is that it has no particular ethnic roots or a majority generational component. It is comprised of a roughly equal representation of all age groups, primarily white, well-educated middle class families, with a few more recent adherents of Asian and African descent.

Fieldwork (Method)

Phenomenology of congregational singing

As stated previously, to understand the singing experience itself, qualitative research was conducted using hermeneutic phenomenology. This branch of human science attempts to give a "direct description of our experience as it is" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii). Phenomenology engages with the pre-reflective human world, the primary

experience and the significances of it. Lived experience descriptions form the core of the data required for this type of investigation.

> A good description that constitutes the essence of something is construed so that the structure of a lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way. (van Manen, 1997, p. 39)

I gathered descriptions of singing through interviews or anecdotes written by participants. As many participants as possible of all ages were solicited from the Eldridge congregation with the approval of the church leadership. A notice asking for volunteers was published in a Sunday Bulletin and given to all who attended on that Sunday. The following is a slightly edited version, some identifying place names being removed.

> A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF CONGREGATION SINGING
>
> At the September 29 [2003] meeting of the church board, approval in principle was given to a request by Mr. Gordon Adnams to conduct a study of congregational singing among us at Eldridge. Our blended, multigenerational service is the kind of setting that is ideal for his study. Gordon will be asking volunteers to participate by recalling, in a 30-40 minute interview, a significant experience of singing while in the congregational setting: a time from the past or the present, that made an impression, either positive or negative. Volunteer participants will be asked to sign a consent form which outlines the interview process, the protection of the rights of the volunteer and the researcher's guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity.

> You might already know Gordon…as he is currently Associate Professor of Music at Taylor University College (formerly North American Baptist College) and is conducting this study as part of his Ph.D. dissertation. He will be a regular participant/observer in our worship services until the study is completed and will also attend the congregational meeting on Monday October 27, prepared to address any questions or concerns you might have.

I approached various members of the congregation and asked if they were willing to help in my research of congregational singing. Those who responded positively (most) were interviewed one-on-one in their homes, at the church, or in coffee shops and (among other questions), asked to recall significant experiences of singing while in the congregational setting. Subsequent to the interviews, I supplied each volunteer with a verbatim transcript for their correction and approval. In lieu of an interview, written anecdotes were accepted, and one participant submitted a written version of his thoughts after reading my transcription of his interview.

I also interviewed individuals outside of the Eldridge church community whom I knew had interesting experiences of congregational singing gleaned from within their own church communities or from larger other-than-Sunday Christian music-based worship gatherings. Because phenomenological analysis is concerned with the essence of experience, where the anecdotal material is found does not change its findings. Therefore, a larger collection of stories enriches the possibilities for uncovering phenomenological themes.

All volunteer participants were asked, in an informal, semi-structured interview, questions intended to elicit a description of a lived experience: a specific, memorable

time when singing in church or with other Christians in extra-church gatherings. The interview questions pursued topics as they emerged in conversation, and they usually revolved around or evolved from the following general areas of enquiry:

Can you recall a particular instance when you were really "into" singing a congregational song?

- Please tell it as you experienced it.
- Describe the moment of singing from the "inside."
- How were you aware of yourself? Of others? Your body? Your voice?
- How did you experience the words? The music?
- If the singing was a hymn, then describe it as a hymn.
- . If the singing was a chorus, then describe it as a chorus.
- Can you describe an experience that you might call "worship?"

In compliance with the ethical requirements of the University of Alberta, guarantees of anonymity were given to all participants. To ensure complete anonymity, all names of people and places and other identifying references have been changed in this dissertation, except those that relate directly to the author. (See, Appendices, Ethics review)

Ethnomusicology

For the ethnographic purposes of this project, it is important that descriptions of the experience of singing include those from a church community that deems itself to practise blended worship and has a full range of ages present in the services. These descriptions of the experience of singing together can be analyzed phenomenologically to

glean some of the lived meanings of the experience of singing. Also, they can be examined using the lens of ethnomusicology to discover the processes involved in creating the singing experience, and what happens within the group as they sing together in worship.

Ethnomusicology is a broad field, as it encompasses many disciplines and theoretical perspectives. As stated previously, it is primarily concerned with writing about the ways people make music, and what happens when people make music (Myers, 1992). Post (2006) describes ethnomusicology as the study of "world music" in the 21st century.

> Ethnomusicologists embrace the contemporary musical landscape and are concerned with the broadest range of cultural expression. The dynamic exchange they take part in involves musicians and musical communities, scholars, journalists, politicians, healthcare workers, members of the legal community, religious practitioners, among others, in their own neighbourhoods and around the world. Their diverse experiences and points of view offer a wide range of research methods and theoretical approaches. Increasingly their experiences also bring them out of the academy and more actively into communities where they conduct their research, play multiple roles as researchers and teachers, filmmakers and recordists, performers and activists for social change. (p. 3)

In this study, the musical ethnography has been written in harmony with the phenomenological treatment of the individual lived experience of singing and derived from the interviews of the Eldridge worshippers and music leaders. From October 2003 to January 2004 and from June to October 2004, I observed and participated in the

surrounding, immediate, musical-cultural context as a congregational singer. Also during these times and extending to December 2004, in addition to the congregants, I interviewed the musical and pastoral leadership to discover the processes that create specific occasions for worship with its specific song material that each congregant experienced. I asked permission to video-record worship activity of the congregation but it was not given, the reason being that the presence of video cameras in the worship service would be intrusive and inappropriate. I attended two rehearsals for song accompaniment, interviewed the current pastor, the primary church musicians, gathered church publications such as weekly worship bulletins, kept a record of songs sung as well as copies of the songs sung and all other pertinent material generally available to all.

The following questions were used to guide the interviews with musical leaders:

Who chooses the songs for the congregation to sing?

Why are songs chosen for particular services?

Is there significance to the order in which the songs are sung?

Who makes the major musical decisions – e.g. tempo, form, volume, balance, instrumentation, personnel - for the accompaniment?

Are there organizational structures or policies that guide any of these choices?

What considerations are given to the congregation when making repertoire and other musical choices?

Analysis of Fieldwork Data (Method)

Phenomenological writing

> The insight into the essence of a phenomenon involves a process of reflectively appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience. (van Manen, 1997, p. 77)

To arrive at any phenomenological insights, as van Manen has described, the gathered interview and anecdotal material must be analyzed. Having conducted and transcribed the interviews with congregants from Eldridge Baptist Church, I searched the written conversations for broad similarities of experiences and within these, for more detailed thematic aspects of congregational singing, attempted to answer the basic question, "What is the uniqueness of this experience?" One of the more difficult exercises in the process of reflectively analysing the material is to "bracket" one's presuppositions and world view, to attempt to gain the "natural" attitude (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 63). In other words, "We need to come to terms with our assumptions…to hold them deliberately at bay" (van Manen, 1997, p. 47) and to return to the "things themselves" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xi). The results of this thinking were a series of insights that were expressed as phenomenological themes.

Writing descriptively and interpretively around these themes becomes a way to uncover and explore the many layers of the experience of singing in a worship service. The phenomenon needs to be thoroughly contemplated, turned around and over, scrutinized from as many angles as possible, allowing for imaginative reflecting on the words and turn of phrase used in the reporting. In all of this questioning, care must be taken to remain grounded in the actual human activity as described.

> The methodology of phenomenology is more a carefully cultivated thoughtfulness than a technique. Phenomenology has been called a method without techniques. The "procedures" of this methodology have been recognized as a project of various kinds of questioning, oriented to allow a rigorous interrogation of the phenomenon as identified at first and then cast in the reformulation of a question. The methodology of phenomenology requires a dialectical going back and forth among these various levels of questioning. (van Manen, 1997, p. 131)

Ethnomusicological inquiry

In much of the literature that arises from and defines the worship wars, all analysts describe characteristics that lurk in the surrounding currents of contemporary culture and are also found in contemporary evangelical worship singing. These include individualism (Bellah, 1996; Dawn, 1995; Hustad, 1998), high value on authenticity (Carroll and Roof, 2002) and susceptibility to self-centeredness (Dawn, 1999). In interviews with worshippers from the church congregation under study and others, these threads emerged. How are they understood and enacted by congregants in a musically diverse – blended – context?

Charles Taylor, in his book *The Malaise of Modernity* (1991), explores the "worry" of individualism. He observes its principle that

> everyone has a right to develop their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value. People are called upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own self-fulfillment. What this consists of, each

> must, in the last instance, determine for him-or herself. No one else can or should try to dictate its content. (p. 14)

Taylor proposes that in our culture there is a yearning by the individual for a sense of authenticity.

> There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way and not in imitation of anyone else's. But this gives me a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for me. (pp. 28, 29)

Congregational singing and its attendant expressive modes can be understood as contingent acts as each individual attempts to find his or her authentic worship voice and practice within the communal setting. As Anton (2001) puts it:

> Selfhood, as negotiated in immediate encounters with others is fundamentally inseparable from the intentional comportments and material practices that are opened for self inscription. (p. 69)

And so the negotiation of selfhood with its complex of influences may be especially problematic in a multi-generational, blended worship environment, where, in the case of the church congregation under study, there have been created and labelled two distinct types of song offered in two distinct ways: "Hymns" accompanied by the piano and organ, and "Worship Team," the label used for the singing of choruses accompanied by the guitar-based ensemble. Also, the choice of repertoire is not that of the congregational singer. Although among the people present in the services there are preferences for one type or the other, it is assumed that all will participate in both to some degree. For a church congregation, context includes the physical environment: place, with all of its

characteristics, enacted ritual, symbols present and implied, as well as other people with whom one sings and who create the occasions for singing. All aspects of the musical activity itself must be considered, including musical style of accompaniment. How the music and text are presented – in a hymnal, on song sheets or in the church bulletins, on overhead or computer generated projection – is an influential factor that carries cultural and historic meanings. Because all these may be present while individuals are singing together, they need to be accounted for to fully understand the experience of personal singing and how they may impact attempts to realize a sense of personal and musical authenticity. These many facets of congregational singing are the subject of this study.

What, then, is the experience of the worshipper as she or he is called upon to offer praise to God in community in ways that may or may not be true to oneself? I attempt to bring together the themes surrounding the notion of authenticity using Taylor's concepts and examine how people realize a sense personal authenticity as they sing in community in the specific environment established as a worship service. However, other notions of authenticity relate to musical presentation.

> 'Authentic' performance may refer to one or any combination of the following approaches: use of instruments from the composer's own era; use of performing techniques documented in the composer's era; performance based on the implications of the original sources for a particular work; fidelity to the composer's intentions for performance or to the type of performance a composer desired or achieved; an attempt to re-create the context of the original performance; and an attempt to re-create the musical experience of the original audience. (Butt, 2006)

As there are two distinct styles of song present in the services of the congregation under study, do the musicians approach their music-making with any sense of performance authenticity? Do the music-makers consider themselves in any way as performers? If they do, how do they do it and what, if any, are the effects on the congregational singers? Are congregational singers performers? I have attempted to uncover and explore these performance themes, applying the ideas of Godlovitch (1998), Mark (1981) and Frith (1996b).

Phenomenology and ethnomusicological inquiry

When a congregation sings, the song and the act of singing are not the only active texts. "[T]he general principle of locality remains important…[C]learly, one factor in making music meaningful is the way in which it is shared with a larger community" (Crafts, Cavicchi, & Keil, 1993, p. xvi). Sharing music with a larger community alludes to the context in which the music is presented: the demographics of the congregation, the nature of the worship and music leadership, the musical accompaniment and presentation as well as the space in which it is experienced, with all of its characteristics. Further to the issue of context, Steven Feld (1994) states:

> Music has a fundamentally social life. It is made to be engaged - practically and intellectually, individually and communally - as symbolic entity. By "engaged," I mean socially interpreted as meaningfully structured, produced, performed and displayed by historically situated actors. (p.77)

This description can be read as a lived experience called "singing" within the domain of a church congregation. In *Whose Music* (Shepherd, Virden, Vullimay, & Wishart, 1977)

the authors argue that "any particular kind of music can only be understood in terms of the criteria of the group or society which makes and appreciates that music" (p.1). Since the subject congregation is a mix of smaller, age-defined groups that are presumed to have differing musical tastes, there may well be a variety of meaning-making criteria within each category of congregational songs – hymns and choruses.

Merging phenomenological and ethnomusicological inquiry has been an interesting adventure. Simon Frith (1996a) feels that it

> is not that a social group has beliefs which it then articulates in its music, but that music, an aesthetic practice, articulates *in itself* an understanding of both group relations and individuality, on the basis of which ethical codes and social ideologies are present…Making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them." (pp. 110, 111)

I have attempted to expose this confluence of belief, group relations and individuality by employing the two methodological approaches.

> What is needed is a Husserlian return to experience, a vision of study objects that includes both the rich phenomena of expressive culture and their situated constitution by subjects living lives in society and history. Such an approach builds upon ethnomusicology's interest in the multi-channelled nature of communication and the holistic concern for production and reception found in the sociology of culture. Here, musical experience does not just refer to sound, but to any phenomena deemed "musical" by the people who make it and listen to it... The constitution of music phenomena is actively achieved social practice, powerfully informed by the situation, the participants' goal in the event, and a

> potentially endless range of larger cultural contexts; as a result, all of this falls within the purview of phenomenological music studies. (Berger, 1999, p. 22)

The breadth of musical experience outlined here suggests that an all-encompassing "vision of study objects" demands a broad understanding of phenomenology, thus highlighting the interplay between the philosophic underpinning of phenomenology and ethnomusicology. Both Friedson (1996) and Berger (1999) have used ethnomusicology and phenomenology as methods for their studies. Friedson states:

> Although parts of this world, such as kinship systems, political economies, and aesthetic modes of production, can be classified and studied – whether by approximating scientific methods or by turning to interpretive strategies – being-in-the-world cannot be understood ontologically in objectivistic terms as a collection of facts to be gathered, categorized, and analyzed or, for that matter, as a set of cultural texts to be interpreted and rendered meaningful. There is no question that these approaches contribute to the ethnographic enterprise, but they are ultimately only signposts along the way. In themselves, they cannot explicate the way of lived experience that is at the center of phenomenological ethnographic inquiry. (p. 8)

The emphasis on lived experience is at the "hub" of this project, and as such, I have taken care to link the spokes of ethnomusical observation to the hub of phenomenological themes and concepts. Because phenomenology is not concerned with theoretical interpretations of the study object, the relationship between the lived experience of the singers (phenomenology) and the surrounding meaningful context (ethnography) can be problematic as there is usually some theoretical lens imbedded in the analytical treatment

of the musical ethnography. However, I have used the essential themes that emerge from the lived experience descriptions of the congregational singers to guide the analysis of the ethnographic descriptions, thus allowing the phenomenological thinking to influence the ethnography and any resulting theoretical discussion.

Chapter 2 – Historic Aspects of Congregational Singing in the Evangelical Tradition

For millennia, song and singing have challenged writers who have tackled the subject. Too often, studies have focused on the song, not the singing. In these cases, the poem or lyric is dissected according to the chosen rules of engagement, and the music is analyzed and valued for its ability to express the text or other merits. Because it is recognized that the presence of words changes the perception of music even as the music alters the production, apprehension and significance of the text, most considerations of human response to song struggle with similar dichotomies. Discussions specifically about Christian congregational song almost always evolve into an analysis of text as text and tune as tune, and most often the actual experience of singing is avoided.

Congregational song is a unique music phenomenon in many ways. When a large group of people gather for worship, they sing together primarily before God and are therefore performers and human listeners, albeit to themselves. But as listeners, they are not to be thought of as an audience since this kind of singing is not produced from a stage positioned in front of those whose prime role is to listen. The goal of this kind of singing is not the production of art or the display of singing skill but something quite different. On the surface, it is valued as a collective expression of devotion to deity and a mutual encouragement to the gathered worshippers.

Many of the concerns for effective congregational singing expressed by writers over the centuries revolve around how much emphasis should be placed on head or heart, intellect or emotion, body or soul. This can be seen in the following three examples:

observations by Augustine, advice of John Wesley and the concepts and practise of John Wimber.

Augustine of Hippo wrote in *Confessions*, 397 A.D.:

> Nowadays, I do admittedly find some peaceful contentment in sounds to which your [God's] words impart life and meaning, provided the words are sung sensitively by a tuneful voice; but the pleasure is not such as to hold me fast, for when I wish I can get up and go. These melodies, however, demand a place of some dignity in my heart, along with the ideas that are their life and in whose company they gain admittance, and I do not find it easy to determine what place is suitable for them. At times it seems to me that I am paying them more honour than is their due, because I am aware that our minds are more deeply moved to devotion by those holy words when they are sung, and more ardently inflamed to piety than would be the case without singing. I realize that all the varied emotions of the human spirit respond in ways proper to themselves to a singing voice and a song, which arouse them by appealing to some secret affinity. Yet sensuous gratification, to which I must not yield my mind for fear it grow languid, often deceives me: not content to follow meekly in the wake of reason, in whose company it has gained entrance, sensuous enjoyment often essays to run ahead and take the lead. And so in this respect I sing inadvertently and only realize it later. (Augustine, 1997, p. 229)

John Wesley (1773) gave the often quoted "Rules for Hymn Singing" in an introduction to a hymnal, as reproduced in *A Musicians Guide to Church Music* (Lawrence & Ferguson, 1981, pp. 212-213).

That this part [hymn singing] of Divine Worship may be the more acceptable to God, as well as the more profitable to your self and others, be careful to observe the following directions.

i. Learn *these tunes* before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.

ii. Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.

iii. Sing *all.* See that you join with the congregations as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.

iv. Sing *lustily,* and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you are half-dead or half-asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sing the songs of the Devil.

v. Sing *modestly.* Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation – that you may not destroy the harmony – but strive to unite your voices together so as to make one clear melodious sound.

vi. Sing *in time.* What ever time is sung, be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing *too slow.* This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from among us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.

vii. Above all, sing *spiritually.* Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing *Him more* than your self or any other creature. In order to do this, attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your *Heart* is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the *Lord* would approve here, and reward you when He cometh in the clouds of heaven. (p. 213)

Both Augustine and Wesley were concerned not only for musical quality but for the spiritual engagement of the participant, described by Augustine and prescribed by Wesley in terms of attentiveness to the text and guardedness toward the affect of the music. This same stress between emotional and intellectual response in singing is clearly documented by some contemporary writers (Hustad, 1993; Liesch, 2001; Redman, 2002) when they describe the use of congregational song developed in the U.S. by John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard movement and one of the pioneers of contemporary Praise and Worship singing. Wimber's scheme capitalizes on the power of the music of songs by using it to construct a worship progression intended to take the participant through an emotional and imaginative journey. Based on the design of the ancient temple in Jerusalem and using uninterrupted congregational singing, the singer is figuratively led from the "outer courts," through the Temple of God ending in the Holy of Holies, where intimacy with God is hopefully achieved.

> The Vineyard model uses five distinct phases or moments in free-flowing praise …In this model, the first three to five songs are often upbeat and focus on gathering to worship God and then attending to the nature and attributes of God in exaltation. The music often shifts at this point to a softer and mellower sound that

> permits the worshiper to acknowledge God's presence in adoration. The worship leader may invite the congregation to sit. Thematically, the adoration and intimacy sections feature songs that address God personally. The final intimacy phase is the quietest. In many Vineyard churches, songs rich in biblical and non-biblical anthropomorphic language predominate; many songs describe a relationship with God in physical terms (seeing, hearing, touching, holding, kissing). (Redman, 2002, p. 35)

Here, the words of the song are used as concrete guides for the more significant mood created primarily by the tempo and feel of the music. The emphasis is on the effect that the song is designed to have on the singers, drawing them into various levels of feeling, apparently from the more outward objective recognition of the person of God to an intimate, more subjective and perhaps even a subliminally erotic state of personal worship (Percy, 1997).

These three examples of approaches to congregational singing typify the range of experiences of the singing worshipper that may be found on a continuum between simply singing a song as a humble act of worship before God to having one's engagement with a song created and exploited for a specific end.

Discussions of evangelical congregational singing are often addressed in the context of other more broad categories of study, for example: hymnody, church music, worship, history of music, ethnomusicology and so on. As such, congregational singing is a topic that is frequently situated in publications whose purposes range from the instruction for musicians in specific Christian traditions (including evangelical) to more broad philosophical explorations of singing and song in general.

Publications for church musicians, of which there are many, are often didactic in nature and typically contain a varying mixture of historic survey, biblical and theological foundations for a philosophy of church music and realistic ministry instruction. They function mainly as a how-to for church musicians (see e.g. Stowe, 2004; Westermeyer, 1998; Wren, 2000).

In the mainstream of this kind of church music literature, *Jubilate II* by the evangelical scholar Donald Hustad (1993) has emerged as one of the most comprehensive and authoritative works on music making in the protestant, evangelical tradition of North America. In it, the author has tried to achieve a balance between historic theological-philosophical foundations and instruction in good practice by giving much useful advice and direction to practitioners as well as insightful analyses of past and current musical expressions. Although he deals with the full range of musical expressions of evangelical church music, with most writers in the field, Hustad asserts that congregational singing is supremely important and "the only indispensable" music of the church. One reason for this high esteem is because it is a "liturgical" activity - liturgy meaning "work of the people" (p. 448). However, Hustad feels that this central activity, as well as all other musical expressions of the church, must be valued and judged within his rubric of functional art: that which promotes the glory of God and the edifying of the people.

In his section "Making Hymn Singing Exciting" (p. 475), Hustad observes that congregational singing is not what it used to be and identifies contemporary problems such as tensions caused by musical style and textual depth (or lack thereof), weak leadership, dubious musicianship and poor acoustics. These problems he addresses with positive, useful suggestions for meaningfulness in singing to be increased (for example,

sing the entire hymn, or use hymn stories to give background), all of which can be summarized by the injunction to "sing 'with spirit and understanding'" (p. 487). This style of analysis of problems and useful solutions is typical of the realistic and educational nature of this book and many others like it. It is rich in providing historic grounding to present-day practice and useful in the discussion of the practice of church music.

Hustad joins many of the historic and ongoing debates surrounding church music. One of particular interest is the question of honest participation when singing; that is, should one not sing (not be physically engaged) just because one does not believe or is it the case that one can be *"singing to believing"* (Hustad, 1993, p. 120)? He cites William James (1902) as asserting that "physical impression (going through the motions) leads to emotional response, and then to physical expression (meaning it)" (p. 120). Hustad adds his own statement that may summarize the experience of many congregants: "Perhaps most believer-singers rarely experience fully the words they repeat in a worship service. If we are honest, we will frequently pray, even while we sing: 'I believe; help my unbelief!'" (p. 120).

Here is some food for phenomenological reflection: do some congregants sing in order to believe or believe and then sing? If some sing to believe, in the context of religious worship, what is it like to express in song an idea or commitment that does not fully represent ones personal, present state? How does one deal with the gap?

The elusive experience of singing with sincerity, as different from understanding, is more openly investigated in Hustad's section on solo singing.

> [I]t is also important that the audience *hear* the singing as 'sincere,' because sincerity, (like beauty) is perceived in the ears and mind of the listener! I suggest that it is possible for an insincere singer to come across convincingly to an audience and for a devoted, pious believer to be heard as insincere, perhaps because of the latter's lack of an adequate singing-communicating technique. 'Communicating' can be learned – and that statement is not intended to be an excuse for the 'phony' gospel singer. (Hustad, 1993, p. 524)

According to this argument, a singer's delivery or "singing-communicating technique" can be problematic or beneficial for the listener in that the quality of the performance or lack of it may alter the listeners' awareness of the song itself. This is the classic McLuhanism: the medium becomes the message. However, I believe these are important experiential concepts not just for a solo performer, but for the individual congregational singer who is also communicating, presumably to God and fellow singers, as part of the group. How do we embody sincerity while singing? Does a congregational singer sing a worship song using a "singing-communicating technique" that is different from singing a fun song around a campfire? If so, what is the nature of this communicating for the congregational singer? Is it a kind of performing, a group or personal posing? Is this a different sincerity? Is the singing-communicating technique that is being used to produce the impression of sincerity at the very heart of the nature of performance? These questions will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

The Tension Between Words and Music in Song and Singing

As previously noted, one of the most important historic and ongoing discussions surrounding song and singing is the interaction of music and word. In much of Hustad's scrutiny of songs, the primacy of text over music is assumed. He notes that the expressive potential of music, as it is being performed and experienced, together with the possibility of music being able to divert attention away from the text, has been a tension throughout the history of the Christian church, especially since the time of the Reformation. However, Hustad (1993) states:

> The emotional power of music is perhaps best realized in the life of the church when proper music is well coupled to appropriate text....In this union, the music dramatizes, explains, underlines, "breathes life" into the words, resulting in more meaning than the words themselves could express. (p. 31)

It is interesting that Hustad follows this statement with a discussion of right-left brain functions and descriptions and anecdotes illustrating the threat of sentimentality defined as "superficial emotion, or emotion not based on full reality, association without communication" (p. 32). Emotional experiences and manifestations are explored in psychological and scientific terms and thus are explanations and not obviously linked to the experience of the singer. However, within this concept, there is another possibility for phenomenological exploration: how do singers simultaneously encounter music and word? In the experience of a congregational singer, do the words of a song take on a different life because of music or in spite of the music? What is this new perception?

Booth (1981) devoted his work to the analysis of words in song and articulates this inherent tension lucidly, though from his bias.

> The ways in which song words are subject to the pressure of their music are subtle and fascinating. They are reinforced, accented, blurred, belied, inspired to new meaning, in continual interplay. In that interplay there is a constant tugging against the resolution of the words to carry out their own business. The words must have an internal discipline to maintain their integrity in their cooperation and in their competition with the music. They must contend with the positive distraction threatened by the accompaniment and the fact of this threat of distraction opens a way into analysis of the general forms such words take. (pp. 7, 8)

Kenneth Hull (2002) discusses the relationship between the text and music of hymns, relying heavily on Cone (1974). Hull reports that Cone

> calls his book 'a theory of musical utterance' – an answer to the question, 'If music is a language, then who is speaking?' His answer to this question considers especially the genre of the art song, in which the words of a poet are set to music. (p. 14)

Hull's article summarizes Cone's work and applies Cone's basic concepts to the relationship between hymn texts, hymn tunes and hymn singers. Hull notes that the hymn

> rather than being an aesthetic object, experienced at a certain critical distance by an audience, is identified with directly by the congregation, so that while they sing, the persona implied by the text and music is taken on by the singers… Whatever power the text and music have is amplified by being experienced 'from the inside.' (p. 16)

Ironically, Hull then analyzes the shifting meanings of the text of the hymn *Amazing Grace* as it is combined with a variety of tunes, never referring to an actual experience "from the inside" of the singer but from his own interpretations based on his readings of the interplay of the musical and textual score.

Viladesau (2000), in his more philosophical exploration of song, also notes the tension of word and music. He compresses the arguments of music versus text or emotion and sentimentality versus understanding and communication and frames them within Christian theology.

> [F]rom the New Testament viewpoint, the criterion of genuine faith is not an elevated state of feeling but an encounter with God's historical revelation in Christ and a response to it in concrete action. In this perspective one can understand the recurrent Christian suspicion of any form of piety that distracts from the mediation of the word or threatens to replace it with merely aesthetic experience or with a purely individual relation to God that bypasses the community of faith. The strictures placed on sacred music by evangelical movements that stress God's word, like the Protestant Reformation, signify the attempt to assure that music serves as a vehicle for the word rather than constituting an end in itself; for music is a language of its own and can overpower the words it carries, making them into mere sounds to carry its notes. The medium can in truth become the message – a potentially different message from that embodied in word…The emphasis on sensible manifestation rather than word and concept carries the danger of sacrificing reflection and moral challenge to comforting feelings or (at worst) pure ritualism. (pp. 31, 32)

Harold Best (2003) also tackles this recurring theme but does so with direct reference to scripture, specifically the writing of the apostle Paul who struggled in many areas

> for a balance between the intellectual and spiritual. He [the apostle Paul] concludes this way: "I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:15; New King James Version). (p. 147)

Based on this scripture originally written from the context of a pagan culture "that believed in the causal force of mere things, the arts among them," Best asserts that "music is of a different order than text, and the two cannot be taken as co-equally empowered in the life of the believer" (p. 147). He argues that music should be, in the life of the church, "a lisping sign and not a glittering cause…the response to a commandment [to sing to the Lord] and not just a set of tools for influencing people" (p. 153).

In her discussion of this head-heart dichotomy, Davis (1997) contends that the prime stress at the root of the "worship wars" is "between the rational and emotional dimensions of Christian belief and worship" (p. 9) as revealed in the creative tension found in the parallel discourses of doctrine and experience; doctrine as carried by song text and experience being the aesthetic response to song and singing. Her work is thorough and helpful in that Davis gives a credible view of the difficulties present in the life of a church under pressure over congregational song. However it is primarily a theoretic explanation, not an uncovering of lived experience.

Zuckerkandl (1973) tackles the music and text problem by asking "what is the meaning of song?" The question is partly answered by his idea that singing brings about a transmutation. The "tone" [music] becomes the agent of change that removes

> the barrier between person and thing, and clear[s] the way for what might be called the singer's inner participation in that of which he sings – for an active sharing, an experience of a special kind, a spiritual experience…the singer remains what he is, but his self is enlarged, his vital range is extended: being what he is he can now, without losing his identity, be with what he is not; and the other, being what it is, can, without losing its identity, be with him….The tones are the medium in which the transmutation takes place. (p. 29, 30)

Zuckerkandl seems to be saying that the object of the song – what it is about – is transcendently present to the singer in a different way than if the object was merely spoken about. Many questions need to be raised: is this true every time one sings, or are there layers and nuances to the experience of singing rather than what Zuckerkandl posits as cause and effect? Because the object which the singer is especially "with" must be stated and understood by the use of words, is the music then subservient to the text? Or if the words require music to bring about this heightened awareness, is the music more important to the meaning of singing? Does the comparative quality of the music and text affect the ability of one to affect the other in the experience of the singer?

Because this study is specifically concerned with the gathering of Christians who sing of religious-spiritual things, does Zukerkandl's explanation of the meaning of song point to the congregational singers' reported experience of "the presence of God," an encounter with "another," be it God, Christ, or whatever the subject of the song? What are the dimensions of this experience? Is it contingent, or is it always of the same order? Is Zukerkandl's "spiritual experience" a general, human reaction brought about by singing and if so, does religious singing engender a different quality of responses? To put

it another way, if the song were about eating ice-cream, a lost lover or a walk in the park, would this transmutation still be a kind of "spiritual experience" and if so, how would it compare with that of specifically "Christian" singing?

Zuckerkandl's thoughts echo the ongoing tension that we encounter from Augustine to the present – words versus music – but he does seem to give primacy to textual meaning, not unlike Hustad and others.

> It is as though the tones infuse the words with a force that reveals a new layer of meaning in them, that breathes life into them in a special way: not making the word a tangible thing, as it appears when seen from outside, and certainly not in the sense of submerging it in a universal life in which all particularity, all distinctions are abolished, but exactly in its determined content when seen from inside, from a point where the word is, so to speak, an "I." (Zuckerkandl, 1973, p. 40)

What then is the actual experience of the congregational singers? How do they experience the confluence of words as concepts with feelings generated by the words and various musical media and singing? Is there an experiential basis to the delicate distinction of what appears as a mind-body dichotomy? What is the nature of the influence of music on people who sing in worship services? Is an "encounter with God's historic revelation in Christ" (Viladesau, 2000, p. 31) found by some in the act of singing Christian sacred song? If so, is it primarily through the text or music or both or..?

Singing In a Social Context

Blacking (1982) places the fulcrum of the word-music see-saw at the point of human decision-making based on social context. He asserts:

> *Music and speech have no intrinsic power to dominate as cognitive systems, because of some proved or unproved hierarchy: emphases on one or the other, or any attempts to unite them, are the consequences of their use by human beings in social contexts.* (p. 21)

He goes on to elaborate:

> How [music and speech meanings] are merged depends on human decision-making in social contexts, and not on any innate properties of the two modes of discourse. Thus, the only possibility of uniting music and speech rests in the ability of human beings to respond to the total sound impressions without regard to either the music or the speech meanings. This requires that the *listener* create for him/herself new meanings in response to the noises that reach his/her ears. Inevitably, these interpretations may differ from meanings that would be derived from the words or the melody on their own. (p. 21, italics mine)

It is the intention of this project to uncover the decisions and responses and "new meanings" created by a congregational singer who appears to be simultaneously producing, listening and responding to music and speech meanings.

Like-wise, Cone (1974) interacts with this dichotomy of text and tone by proposing a functional view of religious song and raises the question of the meaning of the act of singing when performed in a specific religious context infused with social and ritual significance.

> Is it correct, though, to claim that the text is the center of interest of a hymn? If we hardly hear the music as we sing a hymn, are we anymore conscious of the import of the words? Are not both music and words at the service of the ritual, of the occasion? (p. 49)

There may indeed be uniqueness in the experience of a song because of the occasion that demands that it be sung, in this case Christian worship. Perhaps the song sometimes becomes a ritual act, a generalized experience linked more to the context of the singing and not shaped primarily by music or text.

Booth (1981) and Negus (1996) speak of the potential for fresh insights and perspectives afforded by contextual factors: "how songs and music accumulate and connect with new meanings and beliefs as they pass through time and travel to different places" (Negus, 1996, p. 195). In the life of a congregational singer, perhaps meanings develop and change over time and space when songs are re-sung. Are these "new meanings" or "old meanings" encountered in a new time or place? Booth (1981) describes this more richly and in so doing, addresses a congregational perspective.

> A song text is the document of an occasion on which people of some time, place and circumstance pause from their personal selves to enter into a common consciousness. Songs are different as time and place and circumstance differ where people seek to confirm what they are and what is. Songs offer them various congenial configurations of being, more or less local to the particulars of age, class, occupation, race, sex or sect – less or more commonly human as they evoke common human feelings. Potential in every singing occasion is the passage through that configuration to knowledge of what transcends ourselves. (p. 26)

Are these configurations really the experience of the congregational singer? If the words of the song are the primary common "text," then what of the communally created and heard musical elements? Is there a commonality of experience for the singers, a common consciousness, a "pause from their personal selves?" One has to ask of what are the singers communally conscious? Does each singer sense commonality or is singing more personally defined and experienced despite the setting? What are these "congenial configurations of being?" Is a communal song experienced as a way of knowing "what transcends our selves?" These are some of the questions that this study has addressed.

Rebecca Slough (1996) is careful to make the distinction between hymns sung in a liturgical setting (i.e. a church service) and a hymn-singing event, often held outside a church, not on a Sunday morning and not in the context of "regular patterns of worship services and seasonal cycles" (p. 177). In her analysis, she uses ritual theory as presented by Grimes and Bell and the epistemology of Polanyi and Douglas Hall. She begins to uncover the "meanings" of hymn-singing events and although this singing is not within a church setting, some of Slough's work can be applied to church congregations in their regular Sunday activity and thus give some insights helpful for this study. There are obvious patterns and structures of hymn-events that are shared with church-based singing. For example, hymn-event singing and church-based singing is different from concerts in that "the participants create sound and perform the hymns themselves" (p. 178), both occasions are led by musically competent individuals, and on the part of the singers, "numerous layers of knowledge are required to participate fully" (pp. 179, 180). Some of Slough's more interesting points are made in reference to "mystical, transcendent, religious, cosmic" qualities.

> Hymn-singing events can expand the singers' sense of self and increase their awareness that 'the sum is more than its parts.' There is far more going on than meets the eye or ear. This experience has something to do with how the physical properties of sound create space and a sense of being; how various voices create different qualities of sound; how various singers share some basic beliefs values, and/or commitments (religious or otherwise); or how camaraderie is experienced through knowledge and practice of similar skills, facts, operations and processes. (p. 181)

It is instructive to note that, in applying Polanyi's theory of knowing to the action of singing, Slough inserts brief personal anecdotes given by participants. She then states:

> These last paragraphs have the tone of testimony; they spring from my experiences as a singer, as a leader, and as a friend and colleague with other singers and leaders. I have not experienced the depths of knowledge claimed above in every hymn singing event I have attended; far from it. Some events have been exhilarating; others downright boring or irritating. But I and other friends have had the experience of knowing and of being known in these ritual events. The task now is to move this work from testimony to a more systematic study that interfaces between self, group, action, knowledge and spirituality that exists through this ritual form. (pp. 197, 198)

It seems that Slough moves from testimony to theoretical explanations rather than allowing the testimonies themselves to provide insights rooted within the human experience. However, her observations about the basic characteristics of singing in a congregation offer some categories for thought.

Kropf and Nafziger (2001) in their book, *Singing: a Mennonite Voice,* have collected stories and reflections about the experience of singing in the Mennonite tradition. It is an insightful publication and far-ranging in the exploration of this specific, culturally-defined activity. The deep attachments to particular hymns and hymnals, places and people are recalled as part of the fabric of meanings derived from singing. The basic framework for the more than 100 interviews was "What happens when you sing?" and resulted in this celebration of the heritage of song and tradition of singing in the Mennonite context. Referred to as a ground-breaking book (Diener, 2001), it is a rich resource from which to start a phenomenological discussion. However, the authors do not develop their analysis in this direction. They weave a commentary around the categorized, quoted experiences, interpreting them in theological and sociological terms, and then draw conclusions (Epilogue - What Have We Learned?) that are important particularly for those within the Mennonite tradition.

Dueck (2003) also explores singing in the Mennonite tradition and how three congregations use differing congregational song repertoire to create a distinct identity while maintaining a sense of being Mennonite. His insights include discussions of the use of contemporary Christian song in evangelical worship. Of particular interest is Dueck's (2003) suggestion that, "rather than Christian popular music being understood as a totally exceptional move to accommodate the culture, Christian musical practice should be understood as a history of relationship to broader cultural trends and expressive practices" (p. 159). This is a theme that I also will take up and develop.

Marini (2003) offers an insightful overview of American sacred song. Using case studies, he attempts to "uncover the complex role of sacred song in religious cultures" (p.

12). The introduction, entitled "What is Sacred Song?" serves as a review of sources and themes addressing the title question. The methodology of Marini's study is centered on interviews to "let the singers articulate the sacrality of their own songs." He then uses three major disciplines to interpret this evidence: history, musicology and religion theory (p. 11). Ranging from traditional song – that of the American aboriginals, Hispanic Catholics, Black Pentecostals and Jewish musical revival – to the more contemporary – New Age religion, controversy over hymnal revisions, individuals in commercial gospel music and "The Conservatory Tradition" – Marini analyses and explicates the practice of song in specific contexts, but offers little of the essence of the communal singing experience from the anecdotal insights. However, in the chapter exploring the pitfalls of hymnal revision, he re-iterates the importance of sacred song as a "profoundly stabilizing force in Protestant religious culture" (p. 210) and that this stability is fragile and, therefore, needs to be understood by all who would venture into its territory. In his conclusions, Marini admits that current theories

> at least in the arena of sacred song, have been found wanting…There is a voice in the expressive forms of religious culture that belies and persistently challenges theoretical efforts to silence it by functional and factorial rationalization. More important, that voice, in the form of sacred song, speaks through and beyond every element of religious culture…in the end it is the living reality of human religiousness that moves the believer to sing and compels the scholar to understand. (p. 329)

It is the exploration of the living realities of religious singing that this project attempts.

The Influence of Popular Song and Culture

In considering the social context of congregational singing, one must take notice of the overwhelming presence of song in today's popular culture. For most people, a reference to song and singing immediately calls to mind individuals or small groups who sing, either live or electronically mediated, for an audience. This is so much a part of the social consciousness that a whole genre of TV programs has been created to celebrate this phenomenon in audaciously superlative terms: "Canadian Idol" refers exclusively to singers!

One may find a crowd of people singing in the stands at European football (soccer) games, and it is possible to see the lips of adoring fans move in sync with their pop heroes performing in spectacular musical-theatrical events. However, it is safe to say that congregational singing in a church is not a fashionable mainstream singing activity, but it has been greatly influenced by the popular culture that surrounds it.

Historically, evangelicals have not hesitated to envelop the trends of the day and use them to their own advantage, thus shaping the evolution of congregational song and singing in their tradition. It is important to note that, in the last 150 years, the major influence for this kind of change has come largely from outside church denominational structures; from organizations established primarily for evangelistic efforts. Modern examples are Youth for Christ or The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Stowe (2004) reports that the American 19th century evangelistic team of preacher Dwight Moody and musician Ira Sankey changed the song repertoire of North America and Britain with their unique gospel songs introduced to the public in their huge meetings during the 1870's. These men and the many imitators that followed used a combination

of congregational singing, large choirs and soloists together with compelling preaching in their attempt to convict the masses of their need for Christ.

> Their songs would exert an enormous influence on the musical worship of evangelical Protestants in Britain and America, reaching "vast numbers hitherto unacquainted with hymns and unused to public worship," according to hymnologist Louis Benson. "The new melodies penetrated even the music halls and were whistled by the man on the street. Some of the new hymns became household words." (Stowe, 2004, p. 98)

The songs were often presented to the gathered crowds in the form of a solo sung by the musician partner of the team with the audience sometimes joining in the refrain (Vaughn, 1996). The model for these songs was that of the music hall or vaudeville opera house. Sentimental themes, such as a mother's broken heart over her son's wandering from his religious upbringing or a father's lament for a dead child, were designed to evoke a strong emotional reaction from the congregation (Kee, 2004). Many of these solos and congregational songs were published in large collections and became hugely popular, some of which eventually entered the mainstream of evangelical hymnody (Stowe, 2004). Vaughn (1996) asks important questions about this practice:

> The incorporation of gospel songs into hymnals intended for public worship exercised enormous influence on those denominations that sang them. A gospel song at a revival meeting has certain implications: it is sung to awaken and convict the unconverted; it is sung to create an atmosphere of expectation in the congregation (or audience). When the same song is sung in public worship in a church on Sunday morning, those implications are largely carried over from the

> revival meeting. Is this desirable? Are the meaning and purpose of revival meetings and public worship the same? (p. 69)

Bergler (2004) chronicles the shaping of musical tastes of the emerging post-World War II evangelical youth of North America. He analyses the rallies designed to appeal to young people through three decades (1940-1970) of Youth for Christ activity.

> The musical revolution sparked in part by Youth for Christ provoked heated controversy which has not yet died down. Church music experts accuse the innovators of turning worship into a rock concert, while the innovators accuse the traditionalists of turning it into a music appreciation class. Both sides are naïve about the cultural complexities of preserving and transmitting the Christian heritage because, in different ways both assume that taste and theology can be easily distinguished. But Christian music plays a much more complex role in the aesthetic process of individual and collective identity formation. The music used in church is controversial because it mediates between sacred and secular, young and old, emotion and restraint. Caught between old school aesthetes, fundamentalists, and youth culture, the members of Youth for Christ helped legitimate a new pop culture spirituality….Christian teenagers at Youth for Christ rallies lobbied for a new musical language in which to express and experience the thrill of knowing Jesus. (p. 124)

This new musical language again consisted of borrowing and mimicking that of the popular culture. The bringing together of the sacred and secular is exemplified by the career of Ralph Carmichael, who was reared in a Christian fundamentalist church and, while maintaining his Christian convictions, pursued a musical career that "included

musical arranging for artists like Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole and Roger Williams, as well as film and television" (Bergler, 2004, p. 126). At the same time, he wrote scores for Billy Graham films and musical groups sponsored by Youth for Christ as well as for church youth choirs.

Similarly, the Canadian evangelist Charles Templeton "drew on popular entertainment of the day to draw young people to his meetings" (Kee, 2004, p. 116). A report of a 1946 Youth for Christ rally in Toronto conducted by Templeton notes that

> [t]he tone of the [congregational] songs was consistently celebratory: "Isn't it grand to be a Christian, isn't it grand?" singers asked one another.
>
> Isn't it grand to be a Christian, isn't it grand?
>
> Isn't it grand to be a Christian, isn't it grand?
>
> Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,
>
> Saturday and all day Sunday. Isn't it grand?
>
> "It's truly wonderful" another song seemed to reply.
>
> It is truly wonderful what the Lord has done.
>
> It is truly wonderful. It is truly wonderful.
>
> It is truly wonderful what the Lord has done,
>
> Glory to His name.
>
> This kind of repetition was not unusual. The same line could occupy as much as three quarters of the total lyrics, which rarely exceeded nine lines. The short refrains preferred by Templeton reinforced through repetitions his basic gospel message. The songs were easy to follow and memorize, and kept the pace

> moving – the audience participants could throw all of their energy and emotion into singing without being hampered by the words. (Kee, 2004, p.115)

It is evident that the overflow of song forms from the culture at large into evangelical church worship practices was and still is common practice. One of the most interesting points in the experiential aspects of this kind of congregational song is that a major consideration is its usefulness. This utilitarian view seems to have been based on the effect that it would have on the congregational singers or audience, drawn from experience with related entertainment forms. The lyrics used by evangelists were that of urging one to consider conversion or the celebration of the saved life, while the music had a quality appealing to the emotions. This use of song demonstrates little concern for the rivalry between text and music for the attention of the singers. Instead we see a deliberate attempt to use the overall affect of the song for a desired end.

For today's church environment, the evangelistic, persuasive language of the revivalist rallies and the celebratory proclamation of one's salvation have been abandoned and replaced almost exclusively by words of ecstatic praise and metaphors of intimate love taken from popular song and used in praise and worship of God (Ward, 2005).

> The rise of gospel pop also revealed a popular redefinition of the emotions deemed proper in worship. Reverence, contrition, and perhaps a subdued sense of exaltation had been the only approved emotions in Protestant worship….While traditionalists tried to induce reverence by making church music as different from popular fare as possible, evangelical teenagers tried to make worship more fun than a school dance. (Bergler, 2004, p. 149)

It is evident to me that an important common thread in evangelicalism is the use of popular song styles, from whatever era, for their ability to evoke a predictable and functional reaction or response from the congregation-audience, be it preparation for preaching, conviction of sin or an intimate encounter with God. This can be seen from the practices of Moody and Sankey through to the present generation of evangelicals as exemplified in the five phase worship scheme of John Wimber. As Bergler (2004) reports:

> [A]t the 1968 YFC convention, one male crooner sang a song with a chorus that included the line "I'm in love with Jesus." Such music paved the way for the love songs to Jesus that would appear in later decades. Teenagers found such songs appealing in part because they resonated with the established musical language of romantic love found in popular culture. (p. 147)

For the purposes of this study, we therefore need to ask: In a Sunday worship service where popular song styles are sung, are there experiential expectations and interactions with these kinds of songs brought by a congregational singer that are shaped by previous encounters with this same style in other non-church or non-religious contexts?

The influence and impact of many of these ideas can be seen in local churches as they establish their own way of singing in worship, find a core repertoire to sing and develop a style of presentation. These elements of a Sunday service are not frozen in time, but evolve, being influenced by many of the discussions and cultural expressions that have been outlined. And so, I turn now to a particular evangelical church community to explore their formation, execution and experience of congregational singing.

Chapter 3 – Facilitating Congregational Singing at Eldridge Baptist Church

Congregational singing in a worship service rarely "just happens." It is most often a result of the thinking, planning, experience and training of people who have been given the responsibility by the church members. What makes each local expression unique is that a particular group of leaders make decisions based on a multitude of factors rooted in their personal histories and the traditions and resources of the local body as it has evolved through other decision-making processes. And so before the actual experience of congregational singing is explored, one needs to take into account the contextual factors that influence congregational song of the group under study.

Eldridge Baptist Church, founded in 1912 (see Chapter 1, The setting), enjoyed a Sunday morning attendance of about 150-160 people during the time of this research. The congregation has no particular ethnic roots and, at present, no majority generational component. They are primarily white, well-educated middle class families, with a few more recent adherents of Asian and African descent. This chapter will uncover and explore the understandings and influences that shape and support the practice of congregational singing at Eldridge; how are the singing events chosen, structured and offered to the congregation. These insights are drawn primarily from interviews with the musical leaders, the people who have been given the responsibility for choosing the actual song repertoire and for creating and-or overseeing the song-based instrumental music heard on a Sunday morning. Some of the themes in this chapter are explored from other perspectives in subsequent chapters.

A different but related perspective from the leaders is that of the people in the pew and how they experience singing in the Eldridge church context. These themes are explored in Chapter 4 based on interviews with members of the congregation who are not musical leaders. These conversations were more focussed on the personal experiences of the people while engaged in congregational singing and secondarily on observations regarding the organizational structures and personalities that regularly create the singing opportunities at Eldridge. This being said, these dialogues did touch on more general aspects of singing at Eldridge and yielded some insights that contributed to this chapter's concerns.

The Significance of Past Pastoral Leadership: Control, Influence, Delegation.

The evolution of congregational song at Eldridge Baptist Church can best be understood as linked to the pre-disposition of the pastoral leadership. Mary, the current Director of Worship and Music, stated that their story of congregational singing is "a history of pastors." Having attended the church for 27 years at the time of the interview and being a salaried staff member for 10 years, Mary knows that the prerogative of deciding who selects songs for Sunday worship is that of the senior pastor.

> Sometimes the pastor is in the mindset where he is really feeling like he wants to choose the music for the service. He feels that it is something he wants to do. Other times I have worked with pastors where music just is really not their bag – they don't have anything to do with it. Some pastors don't trust it to somebody else. There's a huge range.

Mary's memory of events begins in the '70s with the presence of a very musically talented pastor-pianist and his organist wife. "His natural inclination was to make decisions about music and for his wife to play" and it appeared that their traditional musical tastes tended to dominate the church culture, not only in congregational song but also in solo and choir music styles. According to Mary, their greatest strength lay in ministry to seniors and this seemed to be reflected in their preferred repertoire.

After this pastoral couple left in the mid 1980s, the congregation changed hymnals to the one currently in use, *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration* (Fetke, 1986) which contains some chorus material and contemporary hymns together with the expected traditional favourites. At about the same time, after a period with interim leadership, the church called a new pastor who was not gifted in music. Mary observed: "It was not a philosophical decision to not have this [music] under the preview of the pastor but an obvious and practical kind of decision." Fortunately, there were trained musicians attending the church who filled the roles necessary: an organist and a choir leader. These two personalities had a strong classical bias and were not particularly friendly to the youth music that was beginning to emerge in the larger evangelical world. Also present in the church at this time was a musician skilled in writing arrangements for instruments to complement the congregational singing. His son recalls:

> My father was a brass musician and played the baritone, and there were several other people involved. It was a very interesting time and something that I would love to see repeated. What happened was that the hymns, instead of being what I'll call "fillers," which frequently they are, were events and the congregation was a participant in the event. My father would arrange brass music to be done along

> with the regular accompaniment. There would be a hymn where it would be the piano and organ and brass accompaniment or there would be obbligatos and little interesting things either at the beginning or at the end. I look back on it really very fondly as "what an interesting idea." (Syd)

This combination of lay leadership did not last long as by the late '80s they had all moved away from the congregation, creating again the need for music personnel. In response to this, a young man was hired as Music Director who was relatively new to Eldridge and proved to be open to using all styles present in the new hymnal, specifically the contemporary congregational hymns and choruses. He also welcomed the contributions of soloists who preferred popular styles performed with recorded accompaniment tracks. In these more inclusive decisions, the pool of participants in the music ministry was enlarged and the song repertoire to which the congregation was exposed increased. All these initiatives started a significant shift in the musical culture of the church that continued with the next pastoral change in the early '90s.

The new pastor, Bob, holds a degree in music and came with a background of the contemporary worship music of the Vineyard movement (see Chapter 2). At about this same time, the church also hired a youth pastor, Brian, a gifted guitar player, experienced in leading contemporary choruses and whose wife is a fine singer in popular styles. (This couple serves as volunteers, leading and participating in the Worship Team.) All the ingredients were now present for a credible presence of contemporary song material within the worship services. The influence and leadership of this group of musicians brought to the Sunday services choruses accompanied by guitars and texts projected on a screen, designed to supplement but not replace the traditional repertoire from the hymnal.

Mary observed that, although these changes were "grudgingly tolerated" by many of the congregation, they deemed them "permissible" by virtue of the endorsement implied by their choice of this particular staff with their gifts and experience, together with the church's decision to place a higher priority on youth ministry.

To add another ingredient to this rather complex time in the history of Eldridge, the church experienced significant growth, resulting in overcrowding on Sunday mornings. This increase in population precipitated a somewhat painful and protracted discussion around the need for two services and the possibilities for these two events: should they be stylistically different or the same? Should contemporary music and worship style be featured in one service and the traditional in the other? According to Mary:

> The war was on to divide stylistically and Pastor Bob said no, and I said no. There was a lot of turmoil actually. It was pretty uncomfortable and it revolved around worship primarily. Bob was a much more charismatic preacher than we had had before by a long shot. And he is not all that revolutionary, but for us he was very revolutionary. So it was an uncomfortable time in there for two or three years. That was not an easy time to have my job.
>
> Bob and I sat here [at the kitchen table] a lot and talked about it; the board talked about it a lot, it had some congregational meeting airings, it had a lot of street talk. But finally, the decision was that the pastor felt strongly about it [not dividing over stylistic issues] and the board supported him.

As reported by George, an older member who has served on many church committees and boards, the discussion was finally settled by deciding for two very similar services.

> We wanted people to be able to come to the 9:30 service or the 11 o'clock service depending on their own schedule for that particular Sunday and not feel that they were in a completely different service. They would be comfortable in either one. And secondly, we wanted to maintain church unity. The feeling was that if we went to completely different services – a contemporary-traditional split, which is done in some places – we would end up having two congregations that really didn't know each other and had little in common.

Brian, the then youth pastor, guitarist and current leader of the Worship Team recalls:

> There was a decision early on that when they moved to two services they would both have contemporary and non-contemporary i.e. hymnody elements in them. That decision was made because there was a desire to keep integrated the under twenties, and in a lot of cases, under thirties or non-churched under fifties: integrated with an older generation which at Eldridge has tended to be musically quite literate, even musically professionalized. I mean, we've got opera staff, we've got choral conductors, we've got people who sing with some of the really fine choirs in the city, and there's a lot of "academy" type people. And we wanted to keep those two groups knit together – the musically literate and the "pop" musically literate people. And the leadership at the church, in a lot of cases, have been people who personally have a foot in both worlds. For example, myself; I've played in a Celtic bar band and I'm also doing art music at the university level.

But at that time, Mary recalls that some in the congregation still had difficulty accepting any contemporary musical expression.

> Very interestingly enough, I would say the 60% in the middle begrudgingly went along with it – by 'in the middle' I mean age-wise. The older people were the most supportive on the whole and the younger people obviously. But the older people were much more supportive than, say, the 35-55 crowd. We had much less opposition from the Grandpas and Grandmas who had wisdom enough to say, "You know what? If a guitar at the front is going to bring my grandson to church, then bring on the guitars." They didn't care. They wanted to see kids in the church. The 35-55 age-group thought that the contemporary songs were not reverent. They did not want the guitars. This was still very much a tie-wearing church at this time and this music is the "radio crap"– we are supposed to be different from the world. This is not reverent. They did not want this. The hardest group was the middle one.

And so the decision was made and, over the following few years to the present, attendance has shrunk back to a number that can be accommodated in one service, and the mix of traditional and contemporary song has been firmly established as the norm.

Present Musical Leadership: Sensitive Collaboration

There are three visible music leaders in the present church: Mary, the paid part-time staff member – Director of Worship and Music – responsible for oversight of musical ministry; Todd, the volunteer organist and Brian, the former youth pastor and present volunteer leader of the Worship Team. These are the constant, up-front people who are known by the congregation as those given responsibility for the actual production of the music necessary for congregational singing, choosing the material to be

sung and to a great extent, how the songs will be sung in weekly worship services. All have been members of Eldridge Baptist Church for many years, and therefore they have the advantage of being well known as people, not just "functionaries" within the worship services. As such, they also share with the other members of the congregation a significant investment in the past and present life of the church.

Not only do they have a thorough knowledge of the congregation, but they are all highly trained and experienced musicians in the classical or conservatory tradition. Brian, the leader of the Worship Team has earned a Master of Music in musicology and also has been a member of a Christian pop band and a performer of Celtic music.

Todd, the organist, has music degrees in piano performance, has won scholarships to study conducting and has earned a graduate degree in composition. His works have been commissioned and performed by the city's professional orchestra and other prominent ensembles and in addition to his compositional activities, is employed as a top rank administrator of a professional arts organization.

Mary, the salaried, half-time Director of Worship and Music, oversees all the music that occurs on Sunday mornings. She is married to the mandolin-banjo player in the Worship Team and the mother of young children, the oldest in the early teen years. Her part-time position has allowed her to pursue a master's degree in English as well as membership in several well established choirs. She also has had formal musical training and much practical experience. Her responsibilities at the church include leading the choir, choosing the hymns for Sunday services, arranging for all the other musical activities that may vary each Sunday and generally giving oversight to the other musical leaders.

The current pastor, Michael, as he was considering the post at Eldridge, noted the rich musical life as reflected in the leadership as well as the congregation: "One of the things that I picked up on about this church…is the level of musical ability within the congregation. We have more skilled musicians than a congregation deserves to have."

Mary works collaboratively with the pastor in putting together the order of each service and his input is valued.

> We [Michael and I] meet every Monday to do a post mortem on the service that was; you know, what went well, what went badly, could we have foreseen it, can we do anything to prevent it in the future, and then to plan the following Sunday service.
>
> I have been working with Michael for a little over a year now [at the time of the interview] and I would say this relationship is a great relationship but it is still evolving and we're learning to trust one another…Often the closing hymn is the one he tends to have more of an opinion about.

There is a definite sense of teamwork and collegiality amongst these musical and pastoral leaders. They acknowledge each other's strengths and value the cooperative spirit that enables them all to contribute with integrity to the broader music ministry.

> I [Brian] personally have an interest and find aesthetic value and therefore worship value in both the hymns and the choruses. So I'm just doing a thing I have particular skills in but I appreciate what Todd, the organist does. And yet Todd probably couldn't sell himself out front with a guitar, but he plays along with us [the Worship Team] and enjoys it too. And so we, as a leadership team, see ourselves as working together, each of us contributing something that not

> everybody on the team could contribute, and at the same time realising that different people in the congregation are going to appreciate certain portions of the worship service over the other, regardless of the fact that as the leadership team we find value in everything.

A high degree of trust is granted these musical leaders and this trust is an acknowledged, appreciated and protected characteristic of the current musical life of Eldridge Baptist Church. This trust seems to have been built on several factors. As already stated, the personnel are well-known by the congregation, all having a long history as members of the church. Over an extended period of time, the people and present leaders have had the privilege of observing each other and serving together, mutually investing in the life of the church. This interaction has provided ample opportunity for the leaders to develop an understanding of and a respect for the traditions of the congregation and their expectations. As well, this kind of communal exchange over time creates many formal and informal opportunities for dialogic influence on the development of the music leaders and the shaping of their music ministry. For example, Mary, as a participant in the on-going subtleties of church life, is able to use this background knowledge in her approach to the congregational music and to the interpretation of the feedback that she receives about any aspect of the Sunday music.

> Some of the dear old folk who have known me as a little kid will just tell me, just straight out…The current pastor and the former pastor-musician have always funnelled feedback to me; people that minister with me have always funnelled feedback to me. That's mostly it – like, feelers out, you know, through the choir, through the other worship team members, my parents. You know…what have you

> heard, what's the buzz? If you hear something, please tell me. I really want to know so that I can do what I'm doing on purpose. I might not change what I'm doing, but I want to be doing it on purpose.
>
> A lot of my response depends on if the comment is a one time thing or if I have heard it before. It depends on who the source is, if the source gets identified to me. There are some folks who just grumble and complain and it's not that you always ignore them, but there are some folks who grumble and complain. Other people never grumble or complain, and so if they happen to say something, then holy smokes, you know! Yeah… it depends.

Mary's concerns extend beyond the musical content to every aspect of the worship services.

> When a comment was made about [the distraction caused by] short skirts [being worn by women sitting on the raised platform] – I don't tend to wear short skirts but perhaps somebody else was on the platform – it was a horrifying thing for me to realize that I didn't even know it. I wasn't aware of it and I could have been being really inconsiderate of these people that are trying to worship. That's a terrible thing, and I didn't have any idea. So that was it – skirts are all long right now.

All the leaders are aware of their responsibility to and for the congregation and are known as persons open to reflective comment and sometimes critical response to their music ministry. Brian, the Worship Team leader, is first accountable to Mary who structures the services but, after he has made his choices and presented these in the

worship service as opportunities for congregational participation, he is sensitive to any observations offered about his ministry.

> Mary provides me with some information regarding what the sermon's going to be about and when in the service things are going to happen so I can pick the tone or the excitement level of the material and plug it in. And then I can just operate on the basis of what kind of feedback I get and that influences my future decisions.

In his part of the service, Brian is careful to allow the songs to speak for themselves, rather than verbally contextualize them or interpret them for the congregation. He is also conscious of his own interaction with the lyrics and if he is in any doubt as to their meaning, is careful to head off any negative feedback.

> Very rarely do I talk [while leading the singing], in the sense that in some services that I'm sure you've observed, worship leaders regularly deliver these short little homilies or explanations of what songs are about or what the intent is for songs. And not being a person who likes that from other worship leaders, I have tended just not to do it. So cases where I will introduce a song – generally the first time we sing a song or if there is something in a lyric that I think could be misinterpreted or something that's tenuous – I'll give a note of explanation or my interpretation. I do this so that somebody couldn't accuse me of perpetuating misinformation because choruses can be…well music in general can be ambiguous.

When asked to explain his role as leader of the section of the service labelled in the bulletin as Worship Team, Brian referred to how others in the congregation perceive his musical contribution to the weekly services.

> Am I a worship leader? Empirically, I suppose that I am because I get feedback from people thanking me for my leadership in that sense; they felt that that component of the service was meaningful to them as far as being an opportunity for them to consider on a personal level, spiritual matters; to be involved in considering their relationship to Christ. And so this is a piece of real estate in the worship service that, at least the people who speak to me, find valuable. So what am I? Am I a worship leader? Or am I a temporal real estate broker? I'm not sure.

Choruses by their nature are in temporary vogue, new songs constantly being produced and marketed. Brian is therefore subject to requests to include specific songs in his portion of the sung worship.

> We have people who purchase Praise and Worship recordings. We also have people who purchase Bill Gaither [Southern Gospel] recordings. And so often – when I say often I mean perhaps once every couple of months – someone will say "Here's a song. Do with it what you want. It's meaningful to me." Sometimes they're self-reflexive and self-critical enough to realize that because it's meaningful to them doesn't necessarily mean that it can be transplanted into the service because of any number of factors – instrumentation, whatever. And sometimes we do those songs and sometimes we don't. There have never been hurt feelings. I'm grateful that people feel like they can have that kind of input. In the case of some of the young people, with some of the *Delirious* stuff, I have

> confessed to them that I like it too, at least some of it, but I've explained that it's not necessarily teachable and singable in the full congregational sense, and they've been fine with that.

Another basis of trust is the musical credentials of the leaders; they are impressive even to this musically astute congregation. These leaders have achieved a high degree of competence as conservatory musicians, and they have also demonstrated that they are able to perform popular styles with comfort and credibility. They are versatile and broad in their appreciation of and participation in many musical genres. As observed by a member:

> If you have a look once again at our church, the people that are involved in the worship stuff [i.e. Worship Team] are the people that are the most formally trained as classical musicians…people who are in their thirties or early forties. (Syd)

The congregation knows that the leader-musicians have worked or presently work closely with the senior pastor, especially Mary who is a half-time employee. Through her, the musical leaders are influenced by the overall shepherding ministry of the church; they have access to larger issues within the congregation that might not otherwise be apparent to them as demonstrated in Mary's concern for the length of skirts worn on the platform. Thus, decisions regarding music ministry are construed as not primarily about the generation of songs for a Sunday service but as a contribution to the larger, more complex life of the church and its constituents.

It is interesting to note this contrasting report from a member who chose to leave another congregation to settle at Eldridge.

> In our former church, the change to contemporary songs was brought in with a confrontational, replacement attitude – this is the answer, this is going to fill the church. They [the church leadership] imported the musicians to form the band, and they [the new band and the church leaders] didn't seem to be supportive of anything that had gone on in the past, including the choir. The people who had been going there all those many long years didn't like it. Also, these new leaders really, really, really, really cut back on the hymns that the people were used to singing. As a result, we went from that church to Eldridge, which is in the same denomination. They [Eldridge] hadn't quite arrived at that transition yet, so for the next year or so things were pretty traditional, comforting and just, well, comfortable. Then, of course, the change in the music ministry occurred. But this time it was so easy; I never heard one person say anything about the change and if they did it would be positive. I didn't feel any kind of stress. I was in the choir, but I didn't feel that we were being replaced like I did in the other church. The music ministry team was from the church for the most part, and they were also more than willing to pitch in and help the choir on special occasions and what not. So the change just wasn't an issue, and I think it continues to be a non-issue. They switch back and forth [between the traditional and contemporary] with great abandon, and it's just another aspect of church music. (Freda)

Choosing Congregational Song: A Delicate Balance

According to Mary, congregational song at Eldridge is chosen thematically to match the over-arching theme of the service. The service theme is determined by the

topic of the sermon or the specific occasion, for example the once-a-month communion service or Easter Sunday. The pastor and Mary discuss the character of the services in this light and

> decide what kinds of themes we want to be focusing on at that point in the service and I have enough of the texts of the hymns and the worship team songs in mind to be able to say, "well, the hymn book does a better job of this kind of thing" or "the Worship Team really does a better job of this kind of thing." (Mary)

Mary then will communicate to Brian, the leader of the Worship Team the general feel needed in the assigned place in the worship order.

> Musically I [Mary] don't need to give any direction to Brian. He's a very accomplished musician and he recognizes that I am responsible for what the Worship Team does so then broad decisions like "we can't do that" or "we have to do this" he respects even if he wouldn't necessarily choose that. He has musical quality control well in hand; I don't need to worry about that at all. The other area for potential lack of fit between Brian and I would be with respect to what worship songs are good enough to sing in church. I care more about the words than he does; he cares more about the music than I do, and so between the two of us, and I respect...I mean...if he says "I just can't play that in good conscience, I can't make people sing that it's too awful" – that's it. He has authority to say that. I say "Brian, those words are just weak, we just can't sing those."

Brian will then choose the chorus material in response to the overall direction given by Mary.

> It's fairly indulgent in that I [Brian] have the opportunity to select from the corpus of praise music that's out there music I like on the basis of what I consider to be worthwhile text and worthwhile music and stuff that's playable by the musicians that we have at Eldridge and stuff that I think could be singable by people, given their musical backgrounds. So I pick the music that I like on a Sunday by Sunday basis and just give Mary two or three songs. She provides me with some information regarding what the sermon's going to be about and when in the service things are going to happen so I can pick the tone or the excitement level of the material and plug it in. And then I can just operate on the basis of what kind of feedback I get and that influences my future decisions. (Brian)

In Brian's estimation, "we do not have a big catalogue of songs." He said in more than one context that he is not anxious to add new material to the repertoire "because I find very little out there that I want to introduce and because I have neither the time nor the motivation it would take to uncover the little gems out there."

Todd, the organist, accompanies the hymns chosen by Mary and the pastor and contributes a musical background wash (sustained chords) to the music of the Worship Team chosen by Brian. The only material the organist chooses is "service music," that is, not the congregational songs but the music played while the congregation is assembling (prelude), leaving (postlude), passing the offering plate (offertory) or during once-a-month communion. And all this he chooses in the light of the theme for the day. Hymn tunes are selected from the congregational repertoire, found mostly in the hymnal, that have texts associated with them that will support the service in a general manner. The organist, Todd, describes his activities:

> I see my role basically as an aid to worship within the context of the whole service. So when I make my choices for music, whether it's for prelude, offertory, postlude or whatever I happen to be playing, I try to look for some sort of meaning within the context of the particular service that I'm doing it in. If we're doing a communion service, then I'll try to work into the prelude some specifically communion-type pieces, because, that's again setting the stage for the event that's coming up, though earlier on. Or if we're having a real hell-fire-and-brimstone sort of morning, I might work in a few pieces similar to that. If we're having a baptism, something like that. I consider the prelude like a little condensed mini-service in its own right. For me, the prelude is really important. Not a lot of people really listen to it but they are sort of aware of the thing, and so I give fairly careful attention to what I actually pick. If it's a sort of generic, everyday kind of normal Sunday, then I usually make my choices more the sort of general adoration, praise kind of choices. But that's the approach I take to the prelude.

All the leaders who select songs to be sung or heard by the congregation use the song text as their primary guide. For all sung material, Mary asserts another consideration: the words of the text must be "true."

> The most important thing to me is the text in whatever style. So as a leader of congregational worship, if I am asking people to participate, I have to honour them by having words that are true come out of their mouths… something that is scriptural.

The "truth" of any text is assured by its adherence to the church's understanding of the scriptures – the Bible. Obviously, there can be no way for the leaders to gauge the integrity of each singers' singing, but if the text is judged to be scriptural then it is worthy of being offered to the congregation as corporate song. This concern is more acute for choruses because these are not drawn from a previously approved body of material, as is the case for hymns which are chosen from the hymnal that has been endorsed by the congregation. Because of the possibility that the chorus texts may be more loosely scriptural, Brian is sometimes circumspect in how he offers them to the congregation:

> Generally the first time we sing a song or if there is something in a lyric that I think could be misinterpreted or something that's tenuous, I'll give a note of explanation or my interpretation. I do this so that somebody couldn't accuse me of perpetuating misinformation because choruses can be…well music in general can be ambiguous.

Mary states her view that congregational singing is, in practice, subservient to the preaching: that is to say that the spoken word should be privileged over sung word.

> Teaching is so important. [As we sing] we acknowledge God for who he is, we acknowledge his lordship over us, we acknowledge our need to be transformed. The specifics on that – how far we are away from God's intentions for us, what God's intention is for us, what do the scriptures say about him, how are we to be brought back into fellowship – that usually is the burden carried by the teaching of the sermon. So to be prepared to hear the truth: I think singing is what prepares us to hear the truth. It [singing] is an opportunity to prepare ourselves to hear the

> truth and that it's an opportunity to speak it back in a way that we are vulnerable. So that's how I conceive of singing in the service.

As the prime medium that gives a voice to the people, congregational songs seem to be chosen for their texts that may shape and direct the people as they sing, with the hope of rendering them more receptive to the content of the sermon. The teaching through preaching in turn provides the criteria for vulnerable sung responses to God.

It has been evident to some congregants that all the events in the services are intentionally chosen around a central theme most often dictated by the sermon. This quality was commended by one of the older members, George, who also views the sermon as primary compared to singing.

> I have noticed over the past number of years that both the hymns – I'm including gospel songs – and the choruses are seemingly chosen to tie into a theme and sometimes I understand that maybe it's strictly by God's leading and other times its maybe God's leading through the interaction of the various people involved in planning the service. It is probably more obvious once the message [of the sermon] has come through realizing afterwards that: "Oh yes, that did tie in; that led us into whatever was the message for the day." That I see as the focal point of the service, with the exception of communion.

Beyond the veracity and topical suitability of the lyrics, the musical aspects of the congregational songs are assessed. In these editorial judgements, the depth of musical training of these leaders becomes an asset used for the sake of the congregation. "Singable" is a word used by both Mary and Brian in describing the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic structures that a large group of people with mixed abilities can negotiate

successfully. Brian acknowledges that there are two kinds of musical literacies within the congregation at Eldridge, and that he takes these into account when choosing choruses.

> I think there are a certain percentage of congregants on a Sunday morning that could learn and sing anything that's thrown at them, in the sense that people listen to the radio and they just learn songs. It doesn't matter whether they're strophic, it doesn't matter what's going on harmonically; they just learn it by rote. And so they are literate with a certain style of popular music. But, for a large percentage of people, like the ones that are musically literate in the art music sense, they are used to strophic stuff – hymnody – that's for the most part regular. And so I think I pick music [choruses] that's going to be easy to learn in that sense. There aren't a whole lot of harmonic surprises – most of them have three or four chords – and we laugh about it in worship practices. Todd, on the organ, will suggest as we're talking about how to arrange things: "I think for this one I'm just going to hold my foot on the E pedal through the whole thing." And what's funny is that he could and in some cases it's even appropriate.
>
> So I believe that I pick things that are easy to learn, and in cases where there is some syncopation or stuff like that, generally there is just an A and B section that repeat, and so at least people have an opportunity to catch it the second time through.

These values are echoed by Mary but with the recognition that, ultimately, each singer is autonomous in how he or she interacts with the songs offered. However, she assumes that each congregant will bring a communal consciousness to their interaction that considers not just the self in the act of singing in worship but the "blessing" of the other.

> The song has to be singable in whatever style it is. It has to be singable. If you put music outside the ability of the vocal cords of those people to navigate it, they aren't going to be blessed. So now we have something that is scriptural and is singable, and after that, the individual members of the congregation decide, the motive being, "I get to listen to, to worship to whatever kind of music I want all the other hours of the week. For this one hour, I will sing whatever blesses my 'brother.'"

In summary, congregational music at Eldridge Baptist Church is chosen primarily for the truth of the text in its support of the topic of the sermon or the specific occasion, and because it is singable, with consideration given especially by Brian to those who may have difficulty in learning any new chorus material.

There is no doubt that part of the pleasure derived by the congregation in singing is related to having accomplished, secure leadership and accompaniment. Edward, a regular congregant, used the term "sure-footedness" to describe the musicians' proficiency that makes for confident congregational participation in both styles. Ruth, a younger member, was enthusiastic in her assessment of the quality of the accompaniment.

> I like the way the hymns are led because you can hear the other people in the congregation singing when you don't have the instruments mic'd. But with the praise [Worship] team, I really appreciate having the violin and the mandolin-banjo and the other instruments because it just kind of makes the music more interesting. So musically, they are very different. I like them both. (Ruth)

The congregation is at ease with their accompanying musicians also because they have the educational background and knowledge of the congregation to take into consideration the aggregate vocal skills found among the people, their taste and their musical aptitude when assessing whether a song is "singable" or not.

However, the sources of the songs are very circumscribed. *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration* (Fetke, 1986) is the only resource used for the hymns in the services. The organist chooses tunes for the service music (prelude, offertory and postlude) from this book with the assumption that they are well known by the congregation. Although published in 1986 and in use at Eldridge for about 16 years, it apparently contains enough material of sufficient quality that there seems to be no need to supplement it with material from other collections. The list of choruses chosen by the leader of the Worship Team is rather small because, by his own admission, he is not able or willing to give the time needed to cull the huge amount of available material to find songs that meet the high standards. As a result, new chorus material is rarely added. Laura, a young woman who is familiar with the wider evangelical musical culture, commented: "I really enjoy the style of the worship band but I find sometimes we sing the same very small array of songs an awful lot."

Introducing a new hymn takes repetition over time according to Mary: "For them to worship to it as opposed to knowing how to sing it – it can take a while...a year actually before it is comfortable enough to be worship." For choruses, she estimates: "Probably half that amount of time – probably six months." When asked how Mary deduced that the congregational singers were "comfortable enough" with the song for them to "worship to it," she replied:

> Because I know them, I can say that some individuals just worship because that's what they are there to do – they make the decision before they get up in the morning that they're there to worship and they're going to worship. And those people tend to be a few seniors that I know. They are celebrating the fact that they are going to meet with God in the morning. And they don't know how they are going to meet with God; it's going to be wonderful to find out how it is they are going to meet with God, whether it's going to be this, or this, or this, they decided to worship. Other people are very vulnerable to being musically led. Those folk can worship easier if we sing music they like that week and they have a harder time worshipping if we don't sing music they like that week. When this is the case, they tend not to sing loudly.
>
> It's the difference between…you know when a child is reading and you can hear in the child's voice they understand what they are reading. That's my experience of hearing the people worshipping; it's when they are singing and I know that they understand what they are singing. It's the same sort of reflexive…it spins around in the brain before it comes out; it doesn't just come out. That's the best analogy I can give you. It's when you hear a child read and you know the kid understands what they're reading – it's the same sort of knowing when it's people and their singing.

The difference between "knowing how to sing" a song and a song being "comfortable enough to be worship" as articulated by Mary is an important and complex distinction which will be described and discussed in later chapters.

The positive effect of almost always using a very familiar song repertoire, carefully chosen by trusted, accomplished musicians is that the congregation has a sense of security. Most often they will be able at least to sing with basic confidence and very seldom be frustrated by the unknown. All material, old and new, traditional and contemporary, is carefully screened for quality, singability and truthfulness. However, with only four to six songs sung in the regular weekly services and these usually split between hymns and choruses, together with the recognition that it takes time and repetition to fully know a new song, there is an understandable reluctance and little need to invest a lot of time in researching new material. The result is that the canon of congregational song at Eldridge, especially the choruses, is slow to grow and this is both by design and by default.

I kept a record of the songs sung during my time of research. During the 32 services I attended, the congregation sang 39 titles led by the Worship Team and 69 titles from the hymnal. Some of these titles were sung in more than one service and overall, choruses were more frequently recurring than hymns (see tables below). I also analysed the texts for the emphasis on "I" and "me" – personal (P), "we" and "us" – collective (C) and a more objective presentation of the subject of the song with little reference to the singer(s) – objective (O).

Table 1: Most frequently sung titles in 32 services

Title	Frequency	Emphasis
Worship Team – top 5 of 39 (of the remainder, 21 sung once, 13 sung twice)		
Holy Holy	5	Objective
Refiners Fire	4	Personal
Lord Most High	4	O
Holiness	4	P
Worthy of my Praise	3	P
Hymns – top 15 of 69 (54 sung once)		
And Can it Be	3	P
Amazing Grace	2	P
Crown Him with Many Crowns	2	O
Doxology	2	Collective
Freely, Freely	2	P
Hallelujah, What a Saviour	2	C
I Sing the Mighty Power of God	2	P
Jesus Calls Us	2	C
Jesus Loves Me	2	P
My Hope is in the Lord	2	P
O Come All Ye Faithful	2	C
Rise Up O Church of God	2	C
Spirit of God, Descend Upon my Heart	2	P
Take My Life and Let it Be Consecrated	2	P
To God Be the Glory	2	C
		Personal – 11 or 55% Collective – 6 or 30% Objective – 3 or 15%

The following table takes into account the total repertoire sung (39 choruses, 69 hymns) and their repetitions and quantifies the frequency of exposure that the congregation had to the textual emphasis of both types of songs.

Table 2: Frequency of exposures in 32 services

Titles sung, weighted by repetitions	Worship Team	Hymns	Total
with reference to I or me (Personal)	34 or 46%	41 or 47%	75 or 47%
with reference to us or we (Collective)	23 or 31%	28 or 32%	51 or 32%
primary reference to subject of worship (Objective)	17 or 23%	18 or 21%	35 or 21%

It is interesting to note that the ratios differ very little between the choruses and hymns: almost half the songs sung in both categories are personal expressions, making use of "I" or "me" in the text. Just under a third of the texts sung express a collective voice, while just over one fifth make very little, if any textual reference to the singer(s).

Ingredients for a Blended Sunday Service: "Hymns" and "Worship Team"

Every Sunday morning at 10:45, music from Eldridge Baptist Church is heard all over the neighbourhood surrounding the church; melodies of hymns and gospel songs greet both worshippers and passers-by. Played by the organist from inside the building using an electronic carillon module, the melodies are heard outside through speakers mounted on the small church spire.

Upon entering the foyer of the building, congregants are given a hand-shake in welcome by members assigned to the task. As one moves towards the doors of the sanctuary, worshippers are offered a package of papers by those designated as Ushers. These papers consist of the Order of Service, the weekly Newsletter and occasionally other information pieces. In the Order of Service are listed the events of the current Sunday morning worship service for all to follow while the Newsletter contains notices of coming church events and other items of interest to the members.

The people gradually gather in the sanctuary, where the full texture of the carillon songs, not just the melodies, can be enjoyed as the Prelude to the service. This music is most often selected from the hymnal and very occasionally from the familiar chorus repertoire. The organist, Todd, gave his reasons for his musical choices for the prelude to the services.

> I think because in the context of the church and the context of our worship, most of our congregation are familiar with the vast majority of the hymns in our normal hymnbook, which is my primary source for music. Within that context, I find some of those older hymns especially have wonderful, wonderful texts and the real story of basically why we are there to worship is oftentimes encapsulated very, very well in some of those older hymns. You don't even really need to know the words; even if you're vaguely aware of the words, you hear the melody and it automatically jogs most people's minds to reminiscences of that text. And that text is what really gives them, I think, something to hang onto in that particular moment and helps establish the mood.
>
> I kind of consider the prelude like a little condensed mini-service in its own right. For me, prelude is really important. Not a lot of people really listen to it but they are sort of aware of the thing, and so I give fairly careful attention to what I actually pick.

The people's interaction with the prelude music varies from week to week. Sometimes it appears that the prelude is being actively engaged by many; there is calmness in the way people enter and take their seats. Although some quiet talking may occur, it is not so loud as to be intrusive. Other times, the mood among those gathering may be much more animated by greetings, conversations and laughter. There is no consistently demonstrated value accorded the prelude, which to some is a source of frustration. Al, an elderly gentleman, enters into the prelude in a deep way.

> I love to come into a worship service while the organist is playing the hymns, and in my heart I can sing the text because I know so many hymns. Then I'm

> connecting. And that soft music with a good text is a good vehicle to bring that text to the people, as it were. It's like a mysterious thing that you can't really describe, but in your heart, you know you're meeting with God. And when I hear all the whispering around me, I and my wife have to focus, almost as though we have to do this (cupped ear) to get the music from the organ. And I've been one of the strongest promoters of the prelude by saying "When that organ strikes the first chord, to me, worship begins." It is not a time-filler – sorry! But today we think that it is a time-filler while people visit and gather. It's the saddest thing in the church, things like that; that we don't get past that ever in our maturation process. (Al)

The congregational songs as listed in the Order of Service are labelled two ways: "Worship Team" followed by the titles of the choruses – usually three – and "Hymns" which are listed by their number in the hymnbook and title – again, usually three. The hymnal reference numbers are also posted on a board, high on a beam at the front and side of the sanctuary. These two types of song material are always given equal numerical value, that is, there is always same number of choruses as hymns. However, they are kept distinct from each other by scheduling the choruses to be sung consecutively at one time in the service while the hymns are often sung separately, being placed in the order of the service apart from the choruses and frequently just before and immediately after the sermon. Often the decision as to whether the hymns or the choruses are sung first may depend on when during the service the young children are dismissed for their age-appropriate teaching time.

> We really don't want the children to only sing Worship Team songs (they go out half-way through the service) or we don't want them to only sing hymns. We want them to sing both. We sometimes deliberately flip it around only because the kids haven't sung hymns for six weeks or they haven't sung Worship Team songs for six weeks. (Mary)

Before the singing of choruses, the Worship Team requires time to assemble during the service; some of the band members also sing in the choir and have to negotiate a path around other choir members and through the rather crowded platform, while others come from their places in the pews. When they arrive at the front left area of the platform from where they play, they then have to pick up their instruments, plug in guitars to amplification, adjust microphones and music stands. When the choruses are sung at the beginning of the service, the band and singers take their places quietly and inconspicuously during the first prayer – the Invocation. By the time the prayer is finished, they are mostly ready to begin the first song. If the choruses are to be sung at a later time in the service, this assembling and readying is often done during prayer times or the last portion of a sung hymn. These events afford an opportunity for movement that is presumed to be relatively unnoticed by the rest of the congregation and this is accounted for when placing the Worship Team in the order of service.

The instrumentation of the Worship Team is described by Brian, the leader:

> What we have on Sunday morning includes myself on acoustic guitar all the time, a pianist all the time, the organist, who is responsible for hymns, all the time, one other vocalist all the time, and then based on their availability, a bass player, a fiddle player and very often a mandolin-banjo player. In the past we have had

drums, and in the past we have had additional guitar players, and the reason that we don't have those right now is that those people moved to other cities or to other churches or whatever. So what we have is what we have.

The mandolin-banjo requires some description. It is an interesting combination instrument, having the double strings and tuning of a mandolin that are bridged over a stretched skin like a banjo. It is played with a pick.

Although there is no drum set used in the accompaniment of the choruses, very occasionally a percussion instrument (for example tambourine, claves) is played by one of the singers. More recently, there has on some Sundays been a snare drum played by a percussionist incorporated into the band. The drum was placed behind the ensemble, towards the back of the platform, almost invisible to the congregation, between the centrally seated choir and the piano, which is next to the organ on the left side.

The mix of the sound for the band as heard through the PA system is consistently well-balanced and never overpowers the congregation. The organ, using string or flute stops, provides a chordal background to the texture of the band. The acoustic guitar is prominent, amplified through the house system, and the bass, when present, is heard from an amplifier on the platform. The piano is not mic'd and is rarely prominent. When the mandolin-banjo is used, it plays improvised countermelodies and "fills" and is directly connected to and amplified through the house system, well-balanced with the overall texture. When the violin plays, it provides melodic re-enforcement and some improvised countermelody. A microphone is placed on a stand and suspended over it to allow it to be heard. This is not always successfully achieved.

There are one or two female vocalists: Mary and Brian's wife when she is not playing the piano. When singing together, they share a music stand from which they can read the lyrics of the choruses, though it seems that they do not require it; it is not unusual for them to sing with eyes closed or looking at the congregation. The microphones are usually left on stands, though occasionally, Mary will hold hers at her chest, but never do the singers place the microphones tight against their mouths. Often, while singing, Brian's wife will hold both her hands open, palms upward at about waist height with eyes closed. I did not observe any other physical gestures demonstrated by the worship team while singing. In other worship contexts and churches, it is not uncommon for singers in the leadership team and the congregation to raise one or two arms fully extended above their head, perhaps slightly waving open palms or with a closed hand, emphatically "hammering the air" in time with the music. Also, it is not uncommon for other leaders and congregational singers to clap in time with the music. However, the leaders and congregation at Eldridge did not demonstrate any of these larger physical involvements. In fact, I only observed one person in the congregation who, like Brian's wife, opened her palms upward, waist high, as she sang.

Brian, the acoustic guitar player and leader also has a music stand and a vocal microphone as he also sings the melody of the choruses. The lead vocals are barely audible above the congregation but it is not unusual for Mary to be heard improvising a descant-like vocal line to the choruses.

Both hymn and chorus lyrics for congregational song are projected from a laptop computer situated on the same level as the congregation, using black letters on a white background framed in a grey textured border. The screen is hung from the ceiling on the

opposite side of the platform from where the Worship Team leads. There is a rotation of mostly teenaged volunteer operators, all having been required to take a short time of training. They are instructed to change the slides about two words before the end of the last line. This most always works well, but there are occasionally some coordination issues when choruses or segments thereof are repeated. For the Worship Team segment, the screen is the only choice for the congregation to follow the lyrics.

The texts of the hymns are also projected on the screen, and during the singing of hymns, most congregants use the screen as their textual source. Even though there are plenty of hymnals in the pew racks, and the reference numbers of the hymns are printed in the bulletin and displayed on the wall board. Only about 10% of the people use the hymnal. Nevertheless, Mary feels that it is important for the congregation to have access to the hymnals.

> One of the main reasons that I keep [the option to use the hymnal] is that for some people the hymnal is a valuable musical resource. They see congregational singing as an opportunity to sing in parts and for some people that are literate in that way, they are going to have that resource. The fact that words are up on the screen is not an excuse for the church not to provide a hymnbook. That just doesn't jive. Some folks have visual trouble; some folks like the feel of a hymn book in their hands. The way that you physically interact with your environment in worship is very personal, very intimate and very significant. I'm supposed to facilitate, I'm not supposed to limit. So that's why.

Mary leads the hymns from the pulpit, holding her hymnal and she will sometimes give a contextualizing comment before or after the congregation sings. Brian leads the choruses

standing behind his microphone, guitar slung at a "neutral" angle. He rarely comments before the singing, except to instruct the congregation to stand.

As a participant-observer, I tried to sit in a different place each Sunday so that I could hear the congregation as they sang and survey their physical involvement. Generally speaking, the whole congregation participated in the entire song repertoire. I observed only one elderly person who for whatever reason usually did not sing at all. When the Worship Team led the choruses, there were occasions when the congregation seemed to struggle with rapid articulation of words or syncopated rhythms. This resulted in weaker renditions of the songs. I recall several Sundays when there was a comparative difference in the intensity of the singing between one hymn and another. It seems that the congregation is less familiar with some of the hymnody and it shows in their quality of participation. Over time, I began to notice that the 19th and early 20th century revivalist gospel songs were more often robustly sung compared to the more historic hymns. It confirmed that deeper questions need to be posed: How do members of the congregation experience the singing? Are there different modes of singing that people experience? These questions will be explored further in the next chapter.

In every service, the distinction between the two song styles labelled "Worship Team" (choruses led by the band) and "Hymns" (material from the hymnal) is maintained in a number of ways. As stated previously, they are never mixed in the order of the service; a hymn either stands alone surrounded by other worship activities or is followed by another hymn and the choruses are always sung one after another, very rarely followed or preceded by a hymn but usually by other acts of worship.

Although the piano and organ are used in the accompaniment of both kinds of song, they sound differently in each presentation. They are never prominent when playing with the Worship Team; the organ provides a background of sustained chords and the piano is rarely heard. The ensemble is guitar driven with melodic interest supplied by the mandolin-banjo and violin. When hymns are sung, organ and piano are the only accompanying instruments and they duplicate the written music in the hymnal. The organ is the only instrument heard above the congregation.

It appears that every practical effort is made to maintain the separation of musical genres and an authentic presentation of them (see Chapter 5). Mary, the paid musical leader states her reasons:

> There are good things about the musical style that belongs to whatever genre it belongs to. People respond to the purity of the musical style. I believe that to dilute the musical style is to dilute people's ability to respond to it, either positively or negatively. You get the mush in the middle and I don't want that… if you are going to do a style, then do it. Do it unapologetically, do it as well as you can. And do it. And if you're not going to do that one, then do some other one. Do that one as well as you can, do that one unapologetically.

Mary articulated the uniqueness of the Worship Team and their musical and cultural contribution to the sung worship.

> Some people need to be led in worship by seeing a person up there to respond to a facial expression to engage with, or some find it a visually stimulating thing to see somebody playing an instrument. So they are a resource for those people. However, some people ignore them and close their eyes [as they sing]. The

> Worship Team are also a teaching tool. By the gesturing that just goes along with playing [the guitar, violin and mandolin] and singing, they do reflect some of the power and flexibility and the sinuousness of the style of music and all of that kind of thing. In contrast to the organ, the guitar is a more flexible…no, that's not the right word…there are things that a guitar can do that an organ can't. The guitar has rhythm possibilities that the organ doesn't. The guitar has pitch bending possibilities that the organ doesn't. It's a lot easier for the guitarist to make eye contact with the people than the organist.

All of this contributes to what Mary sees as an important difference between the presentation of and participation in choruses and hymns.

> One of the primary strengths of this [chorus] genre is its focus on the intimacy of the relationship between the believer and God and the pain involved in submission and transformation. That is one of the strengths of that literature, whatever I think about its musical style. As far as the text goes, that is also the strength of that genre. And if we don't have the Worship Team leading us, then we lose that, we lose those texts; they are not a part of our corporate worship experience.

The inclusion of choruses and suitable instrumental accompaniment within the worship services at Eldridge was accomplished gradually over time and flowed naturally from the resources and personnel present within the church. When major decisions were made regarding the nature and content of the Sunday services, the congregation was involved in the process with much formal and informal discussion (see Chapter 3, The significance of past pastoral leadership) and, because of this, the church seems not to

have suffered from any long-term effects that might have arisen from a potentially divisive debate. Pastor Michael, fairly new to the church, observed when considering ministry at Eldridge,

> that it [the music] was very well-balanced; there was a good mixture of contemporary music to interest the younger people as well as choir music and traditional hymn singing for the older generation. And that that was well-balanced and worked and fit together well.

Freda, a member who was present at the time of the introduction of choruses into the services at Eldridge, expressed her satisfaction with the process.

> The reason I wanted to talk to you was I thought it might be helpful for you to know that the blending of the traditional [hymns] and the modern [choruses] can be done; it can be done well. But it can also be devastating if it's not done well [as was her experience in a former church].

The current song repertoire evolved as a result of a relatively peaceful progression and is considered to be inclusively balanced and respectful of the preferences of all the people. However, Syd recalled an incident that highlights the fact that within this environment, preferences still exist.

> Maybe five years ago now, we had a lightning strike on the steeple which knocked the electrical system completely out, and it blew out the organ; it suffered severe damage at the time. Immediately there were people in the congregation that felt "that's God's sign to us that we shouldn't have an organ." It was people who don't really like the organ. But on the other side, there were people – the counter comment to those people – who said "the sound system went

> too, so God must not like sound systems." We made a joke about it for a while but there are people who like one and not the other.

Mary acknowledges that there is some strain over personal stylistic preference that is just below the surface and she has to somehow reconcile this with what she sees as her role in the church: a leader, minister and teacher.

> [We try to] offer a variety [of musical styles]. There is such a tension between the tyranny of the folks in the pew – I call it the tyranny of the nice – and my obligation to minister to them in a spirit of humility, but also to teach them and lead them and invite them to grow up. There's a tension there.

When one views the totality of the music offered to the congregation by the musicians on any given Sunday, I consider that the overarching musical ethos of the church remains tied to the hymnal and all that it represents. This can be seen by the way in which the total musical environment of a Sunday is constructed and presented. The dominant musical presence on any given Sunday is that of the organ and the organist. Before the service begins, the organist plays the ten-minute Prelude or in his words "mini-service," which is heard both inside and outside the church building. He is a person visually present, well-known by the congregation, playing a series of familiar hymns and gospel songs from the hymnal on a traditional church instrument chosen and purchased by members of the congregation sometime in the past. (Contrast this with recorded contemporary worship songs used as prelude music in many other evangelical churches.) Also, the organist has safely assumed that those gathering for the service are at least conscious of the music he is playing, that they are able to identify the melodies and recall,

however vaguely, the texts associated with them. This is the organists' considered criteria for meaningfulness in the exercise and is shared by many in the congregation.

The prelude is valued by the gathering congregation along a spectrum from "the beginning of worship" to ambient background music behind communal greeting activity. It is not only a preface to the service as a whole, but it can be heard as an introduction to and re-enforcement of a specific kind of congregational singing in the service to come. Although the actual number of sung congregational hymns is carefully balanced to be equal with that of choruses, because of the prominent prelude and the offertory in the middle of the service and the postlude – almost always hymn or gospel song tunes – the congregation hears and participates at some level in many more traditional songs than choruses. In addition, on the rare Sundays that the Worship Team leader is away, choruses are almost always deleted from the congregational singing; only hymns are sung. However, the reverse never occurs; hymns are never totally replaced by choruses (Worship Team).

I consider this as the privileging of hymn and gospel song repertoire that highlights a shared canon of song from the hymnal, richly associated with a worship practice rooted in the past. In reality, the congregations' song has not changed over the years. More accurately, it has expanded to include current choruses, acknowledging in a limited way the contemporary evangelical culture and cautiously embracing diverse stylistic tastes presumed to be present in the congregation.

Participation in musical leadership seems to be restricted to those I call the "regulars." These are the musicians who are most always in attendance, on the job, so to speak: Mary, the Director of Worship and Music, Todd, the organist, and Brian, the

Worship Team Leader. These three form the core around which "optional regulars" of the Worship Team gather when available: one of two violinists, the young bass guitar player, Brian's wife who either sings or plays piano, another pianist if necessary, and Mary's husband, who plays the mandolin-banjo.

When one of the three regular leaders is absent, alternative personnel may be used. In the case of the organist, a high degree of training is required to play the instrument, so the pool of qualified replacements is quite small. When Todd, the organist, was away one Sunday, his substitute was a church member who is also extremely competent. She brought a freshness to the service music by her particular choices and a different sound palette to the accompaniment of the hymns. Only once did I observe a service when Mary was absent. In her place was the former paid music director, now attending as a member, who led the hymns from the pulpit in much the same manner as Mary.

In the case of the Worship Team, I observed only one service in which another guitarist participated in addition to Brian. The new player stood beside the regular leader and followed as a member of the band. In my period of attendance, there were several services when the Worship Team was not present and thus not listed in the order of service, and no choruses were sung. After one of these services, I suggested to Mary that even though the regular leader was away, she could lead vocally with another guitarist playing. She indicated that there is no adequate and available substitute guitarist. Therefore, "If we can't do a thing well, we will do another thing well."

If there are any people who express a desire to join the Worship Team, they are invited to attend, in Mary's words, "a sort of informal jam session that happens Sunday

mornings at 10:00 before the service." The presence of a strange musician in the midst of the only rehearsal for the immediate service is not a problem as Mary explains:

> The usual participants in the worship team have been together a long time and so, because there are relatively few new additions to the repertoire, and because the group of people is stable, there is not a lot of turnover in it. And because Brian's leadership is so solid, to say "yeah, sure, come along and sing with us on Sunday morning while we are practicing and see what you think" is not a discombobulating thing for the people who will be leading in the service… It's a way of fielding talent; it's a way of letting people feel involved that you know in your heart of hearts they probably don't have the stick-to-it-ness to commit to the ministry. But to say "no, you can't sing" is just going to be a bad thing. It allows people a forum to have a sense of whether they want to participate or not.

There is a major consideration given by Mary (and presumably Brian) to musical excellence when considering the inclusion of new musicians in the Worship Team.

> The musical result has to be conducive to worship. And there's always a tension between my responsibility to include people, embrace people, to not be elitist or territorial about it – I hate the thought of that – so that's on the one hand. And on the other hand, bad music is not conducive to worship. (Mary)

The final word as to who may join the Worship Team is given to Brian, assuming that the pastoral staff and Mary are satisfied with the candidates' commitment to the church and its beliefs.

Absolutely crucial to the success of the Worship Team are the individuals who operate the sound board. Because the vocals and many of the instruments are connected

to the sound system, the philosophy and ability of the sound technician has a direct bearing on the musical result of the band. Eldridge is fortunate to have a skilled person in charge of recruiting and training volunteers and who also is part of the regular rotation of Sunday sound operators. Laura has had experience as a technician in a professional radio station and has a clear grasp of what is needed in the live musical setting of a church service. She explained her approach to amplification:

> I guess when I'm trying to judge how loud is loud, I think about the vocalists being just loud enough so people can hear them for cues for singing because you want the congregation to be part of the sound, too. I don't want it to be like at a concert, where you're just there to listen to the people on the stage. They're just leading, so you just want them loud enough so the people can pick up the cues for when to start the next verse and stuff. (Laura)

I attended two rehearsals of the Worship Team, each held at their usual time before the 11am service. Individual and family schedules do not permit a practice time on a day separate from the performance day. However, Brian does leave open the possibility, with a caveat.

> If we as a group feel like we need to maintain a weekly rehearsal [on another day], that's great, but I can't do it. If one of them wants to step into leadership, go for it. And they opted no; we'll stay with the status quo and rehearse once a week [on Sunday] and we're not doing new material. So it's not really…the motivation isn't there.

When new material is introduced to the band, it is apparently a rare occurrence, and occurs in advance of the song being used in a service.

> How do we do new material? Generally, I mean, in that hour, if we are doing three songs that everyone could do in their sleep – like *Lord I Lift Your Name on High, Shout to the Lord* – something that we don't even have to run in a rehearsal, I'll say "Here's a new song. We can try it maybe next week or not – we'll see if you like it." I'll just play it through for the band, distribute the lead sheets that have the chords on it and we just do it. Very often a recording isn't even necessary. From the get-go, the ensembles' concept of what a song is, is what my concept is. So the brass arrangements, the multiple repetitions, and the instrumental breaks that may have been a part of the recorded hit arrangement of that song they don't even have exposure to. I'm the gate keeper.

At both rehearsals I observed, the three regular core members and most of the optional regulars arrived in the sanctuary at various times after 10:00 am, despite the fact that the rehearsal was called for 10:00 am. By about 10:15, it was judged that enough were present to begin rehearsal. No new musicians or songs were introduced, the time being spent on issues arising in the introductions and transitions from one chorus to the next. In addition, some broad musical explanations were given by Brian concerning the texture of the accompaniment; how much instrumentation and rhythmic activity should be employed to build an interesting structure for the choruses to be sung that day. On both occasions, help was offered to the regular, young teenaged bass player, who needed to have explained the slash chord symbols (e.g. Ami/C) found on the word and chord charts from which everyone plays. This member is obviously quite young and therefore an exception to the team. When I asked about his background, I was told that he indeed was exceptional in every way: a first class student, a championship athlete and a talented

musician. His father is the most regular violin player of the worship team, but when Dad is absent, a member of the first violin section of the city's professional orchestra – also a part of the Eldridge congregation – replaces him.

Although all members of the band read music, Brian supplies only words with the chord changes written above the appropriate syllable. When questioned about this he explained:

> Even though I have a musically literate group of musicians, when I introduce to them a new chorus, I just give them words and chords and recordings. The reason is that if I learn a song from a recording, from there it's easy to type out the text. Piano realizations [as published] are almost uniformly horrendous, particularly when there's syncopation and stuff like that. What you get in the piano realization can sometimes be less helpful than if you didn't have it at all, just as far as backbeat and swinging things and stuff like that. So very often I'll just learn the song, choosing stuff that's simple to be learned by the congregation, and so generally it's simple for me just to pick up from listening; I won't have the benefit of anything other than lyrics in some cases.

Even without a drum (an obvious and prominent unifying rhythmic presence), there were very few ensemble issues to deal with, and when Brian did address these or anything else necessary, he was efficient in the explanation of his expectations and the members responded without any dispute or alternate suggestions. The final musical product was not a result of negotiation or discussion, but was brought about by acceptance of insightful leadership. Again, this points to the background of the group; they are all

trained in the classical tradition and as such are used to submitting to the authority of the designated leader and the written page, such as it is.

These informal jam sessions-rehearsals were loose but effective. There was the usual "noodling" on instruments during the spoken instructions and during one of the rehearsals, a baby was held by one of the singers, and I was not the only one present in the sanctuary during the rehearsal time. It is also interesting that not all the musicians who performed during the services to follow were present at the rehearsals. All these potential distractions did not seem to cause any concern. The ease and success with which the rehearsals were conducted can be attributed to the expertise and experience of the individual members.

Although Brian and Mary assume that it is generally known that anyone can come to the Worship Team rehearsals and potentially join it in performance, apparently very few aspiring musicians do, the most noticeably absent being young people. As Kate, a regular congregant observed:

> Where are the kids? Where are the kids in this [Worship Team]? We talk about how much they're involved in other things, but where are they in the music? Where are they in the part of the worship stuff? There are rarely teenagers. There's the boy who does the bass, but there are no kids, teens, singing. I mean, they need to be brought in and nurtured in that, or we're going to miss them. We're going to lose them.

Integrating a new, less-skilled personality into the existing Worship Team would require a shift in current praxis; the leaders would be required to work in a different mode, with an altered obligation and leadership style. There is no systematic recruitment or regular

encouragement for mentoring into the Worship Team ministry those who may be "up and coming," therefore this change has not been demanded of them. The status quo is relatively trouble-free and comfortable as the musicians have played together for a long time, and they enjoy long-term relationships. They also have had similar training and share a common outlook on music ministry.

There is a rotation of piano players for the hymns that accommodates newer, less-experienced participants. Mary explained that there has been a conscious decision not to amplify the piano for the security of these new players.

> Lots of times, to not be able to hear the piano while Todd is playing the organ is a purposeful thing, a comfortable thing to teach somebody how to do that job. Then it's a risk free environment. Todd will make way for a more confident pianist and you will hear him do that. But he knows when his pianist is confident or not.
>
> I would invite somebody to minister there if they wanted to. I would have to go and look for somebody to minister there if they weren't coming to me. And it's a great place for people who aren't sure if they want to do it, if they feel nervous, whatever. It's a great place to be because Todd is a security blanket.

This regular, small cadre of musician-leaders are well qualified in performance skills and have set a very high standard of musicianship. However, I wonder if high quality has become a self-regulating standard for admission. It is possible that young musicians are discouraged away from participation by this. And so, despite the reluctance of Mary to appear elitist, it seems that one unintentional result of the evident commitment to performance excellence has been the creation of a rather "closed shop."

Conclusion

Can the services at Eldridge that employ "Hymn" and "Worship Team" be concisely categorized? The organ prelude, the organ as the prominent accompaniment for the hymns, hymns interspersed with other acts of worship, the regular presence of a choir, the printed order of service in the bulletin and the display of hymn numbers on the board on the wall, the availability of hymnals – all these ingredients look to be a conscious effort to maintain the structure, content and communication modes of a traditional evangelical worship service while adding projected text, a few current choruses and a band to accompany them. Nothing has been taken away from the expectations formed over the years. This is indeed a description of a blended service as offered by LaRue (2001) – the incorporation of contemporary music into traditional services.

Meaningful worship singing is an important desire of all who gather at Eldridge Baptist Church on a Sunday morning, both those who plan and lead and those who respond in song. Accordingly, I now shift from examining the specific musical environment that characterizes Eldridge Baptist Church to descriptions of the experience of congregational singing. Although these experiences are derived primarily from interviews with the people of Eldridge who are subject to the conditions outlined above, this may not necessarily be evident in the descriptions. It is the nature of phenomenological writing to describe the more invariant aspects of an experience rather than focus on the empirical practices of an ethnographically identifiable group. However, although the themes presented in this next chapter (4) are related to the experience of singing, there are always links to the context of singing. For example, from the phenomenological descriptions to follow, it will be apparent that it is important to singers

that songs are known well enough to engage in them at a significant level. As reported above, the Eldridge leaders recognize and accommodate this concern in their approach to new songs. It is also reported by singers that it is beneficial to sing without being distracted by incompetent leadership—a value held at Eldridge. Mary agrees: "Bad music is not conducive to worship." But it will also be shown that there are layers and nuances to song engagement that are not always evident to the leaders. What, then, do the singers experience as they are singing in a worship service? When all is said and done by the leaders, what are offered to the congregation are only opportunities for communal song. It is ultimately within the discretion of the gathered worshippers how they will respond.

Chapter 4 – Modes of Congregational Singing: "Being-in song-in-singing."

Joining In Song

In a spoken conversation, words add up into sentences, predicated on thoughts generated by an interchange between people. The words ebb and flow, changing in an improvised stream of ideas. There is unpredictability in conversation that sharpens the attention and demands some originality and care as to what and how words are spoken. And there is no predetermined beginning or end to a conversation; it drifts in and fades out according to the relational contingencies of the situation in which the participants find themselves.

> When I enter the church, I see that most people in the pews are sitting and talking to their friends, probably getting caught up on the news of each other's lives. It is an interesting sight and sound: a sort of giant living room with people relating politely to each other, their voices creating a gentle rumble. At 11:00, the worship leader announces, "Let's stand and sing our praises to God," and the musical introduction begins. It's amazing the change in atmosphere as the chatter stops and we begin to focus. One kind of sound stops and another begins as we start to sing. The individual conversations stop and we sing the opening song as one great, united proclamation. (June)

Singing a song together is a different experience from talking together. A song is a fixed roadmap indicating exact directions and boundaries that we must use if we are to

travel together, all obeying the signs and signals. Usually, we don't each make up our own song as we go along, each singer contributing whatever comes to mind as in improvisational jazz singing. We adhere to a pre-existing construction given to us.

Just as music is not dots on lines in a songbook, but sound, likewise, a song to be a song must be given a voice. A song, therefore, calls to singers for its own sounded existence. It demands to be sung and we sing in obedience. In this way, a kind of conversation takes place between the unsounded song and the singer. In silence, the potential song offers symbols or musical ideas to be changed into physical sound. In a simultaneous translation, as it is being sung, the unsung song merges with the singers.

Sound is part of the world around us. It is hard to escape from sound: the noise of the crowd, the roar of the traffic outside, the background music in a store, our own breathing and heartbeat. Even if we are not attending to it, we still hear it. Sound is constantly impacting our ears. In this way, we are always a part of a soundscape (Schafer, 1969). We experience it as ambience. It is an interesting exercise to stop while reading something and just listen. What do you hear? Did you hear it while you were reading? How much noise is there in the background? We may hear a bird in a tree or the children across the street, the hum of a heater, an airplane going overhead, or the bell of the front door. We selectively layer our sonic environment, bringing nearer and clearer the most important and relevant sounds. Listening is an intentional kind of hearing. And by taking notice of (discovering) what we were hearing, we realize how we are in the world. For example, I may notice the quiet footsteps outside the door when I am expecting company. But when I am reading a book or making a cup of tea, I may be totally oblivious to these same sounds. Each mode of being probably has its mode of attentiveness to sound.

These forms of attentiveness are also enacted as we begin to sing; we "tune in" to the musical environment and listen to and for specific sounds or patterns of sound. They might be the instrumental introduction to the song or the melody that is being sung around us. We begin to sing by paying attention to these, not to the many other sounds present that may distract, mislead or interrupt. We draw the relevant sounds into nearness by this selective mode of being in the world. For potential singers, they are cues, sonic pathways that we follow, leading us to the experience of joining in the song.

Sometimes the sound of singing itself may issue a call to us. For example, a person standing outside may hear the church congregation singing and say, "It was the singing that pulled me in." The quality of the singing might be so magnetic, captivating that we cannot help ourselves. We are caught by the mood of the song as it matches ours at that moment, or our mood is swayed by the singing so that we take up the song as ours. We turn our attention to singing, or our attention is turned by the singing. "In and with his voice, man stretches out and lays hold on the other, as he himself is attuned and held." (Plessner, 1970, p. 45)

But what of the quality of this attention; what are the dimensions of being-in-song-in-singing?

> I get frustrated when we are asked to sing a new hymn or chorus, one that is brand new to me. I get so involved in the mechanics of the music and text that I can't get "into it" at any level. I want to sing, but at that stage I'm struggling to follow the tune and the words, or being frustrated by how I don't know what's going to come next. (Robert)

How are we to understand this experience? It seems that in this learning mode, the more we think about the song, the more we are bound by it. When a song is new, our level of interaction is too much about the notes of the music and the letters and ideas of the words. This too is a kind of singing, for we make sounds in our attempts to master the song. But it is not fully engaged singing nor is it "just singing." The song is present to us as something that has to be learned and this becomes an end in itself. In the context of a worship service, it appears that it is most desirable to have the sense of being fully engaged in the act of singing, but in order to get there, we must come to a place that allows us, in a sense, to forget about some of the very things that make singing *singing* – music with word. This rather paradoxical relationship is paralleled in other expressive activity. For example, we are free to dance once we have learned the steps, when we don't have to think about our feet or the pattern they should follow. Similarly, when we can "forget" about the notes and the words, the song is ready to be sung.

Once songs have been learned, they are a part of our past, having been received and become familiar at another time. As a result, there are many aspects to the experience of singing learned songs that can be described

> as pre-reflective 'I can do it again,'...traditions which fund and orient my present encounters. They exemplify the past's continuance and the way that I, as a gathering of time, am a concernful flight and a stretching along. This does not mean that the persistence of the past is explicitly noticed or regarded. In fact, it suggests that the continuance per se is more likely strangely forgotten…We are able to do what we do, whether we notice this or not, because of the temporal

> gathering, the stretching along, of that which we have done already. (Anton, 2001, p. 124)

But what is it that we are able to do? What are some of the skills brought from our past singing experiences that fund the present? At a very basic level, we can form the sounds simply by imitation or by reading without having to interpret the shapes of the letters, analyze the combinations of syllables or figure out what specific pitch is indicated by the notes on the musical staff. Combining these more general skills within the context of the specific song that we have often sung, we don't have to think about what word is coming next or where the tune is going because we have traveled these paths before; we are able to perform the unique totality of the sequence of sounds that is the particular song.

All these have been so well learned in our past that they require no attention in order to become part of this present interaction with the world. We do them – embody them – without specifically noticing. An example: as I was re-reading the previous sentence, I suddenly became aware that I was rubbing my cheek with my finger. How was I able to do this? I did not direct or attend to every muscle being employed, but despite this, my hand found my cheek and stroked it without any conscious effort on my part.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests that habits like this come about as a result of processes he calls "sedimentation" – knowledge that frees us to act without re-conceptualizing all of our prior learning (p. 150). Such sedimentation, acquired knowledge "is not an inert mass in the depths of our consciousness" but "what is acquired is truly acquired only if it is taken up again in a fresh momentum of thought" (p. 150).

When we sing a learned song, a new entity is brought into being as we create a version in the present, applying all of the necessary skills learned in the past. Thus, each re-living, each "I can do it again" comes with the possibility for freshness; an opportunity for re-interpretation, re-discovering the affective potential of the song. But what if this prospect for newness is not apparent?

"Just Singing"

> There are far too many times in church when I am just singing. I'm just going through the motions without any significant thought about what I'm singing. I'm there in body but not necessarily in mind. I know the song and I can sing the words, and my mind may be somewhere else. I could even be thinking about something completely unrelated to church. And I'm not necessarily participating with any sort of religious feeling. I get very disappointed with myself when I think about it; I should be more engaged with what I'm doing if I'm at all serious about worship and singing in church. (Ernie)

How then can we account for this divided or shallow attention to singing – just singing – that may be the experience of some singers? There doesn't seem to be a "fresh momentum of thought" being stimulated and enabled by the effortlessness of singing a known song. Fresh thoughts may appear to be in the foreground of the experience of some singers but they are not necessarily thoughts in any way related to the singing. It would seem that the quality of the re-singing of a song is contingent upon the degree and nature of attention given to in the moment re-living-through the song. This is a singers' challenge – being-in-song-in-singing.

"Un-minded" singing

> I was singing a familiar hymn and at some point during the second verse, I "checked out." I didn't realize it until we got to the end of the verse and then I sort of woke up to the fact that for the past few moments, I had been completely unaware of what I was singing or even that I was singing! I had been thinking about our approaching family vacation but apparently kept on singing the lines of the song on automatic pilot. (Joanne)

This singer apparently began to sing purposely, paying attention to what she was doing and then, at some point, her awareness was somehow redirected. Although or because the song is familiar, consciousness of it fades and singing the song becomes untended or neglected. Thinking about something else, attention is on another place or subject. Singing on auto-pilot is an apt metaphor: all systems are operational as prearranged and are programmed into the controlling mechanism – the auto-pilot – therefore there is no need for superintendence. The pilot is now free to attend to other things. In that moment the mind has wandered, as if it has places to go; there are more interesting or important things with which to occupy itself. Singing has somehow slipped away from mindfulness and is replaced by another stream of thought.

> This [Sunday] morning was one of those funny ones. I don't know how many songs we sang during the service. In truth, I cannot really remember what any of the songs were. I've just started a new job and I found myself distracted quite a lot by thinking of all the new things that were going on. It didn't matter what I was singing, I was not in church but at work! (Norman)

In this wandering, singers are reflexively oblivious to the sounds that they are making as the activity of singing is strangely rendered silent. The singers don't seem to hear their own musical sounds or the shapes of their words or of those who surround them. Song and singing have no presence to the music-makers even though their bodies are producing sound. Are they aware of their bodies in any way? Is this "senseless" singing?

When singers return from the mental excursion away from singing, there is recognition of temporary amnesia; for a time, the singers were unaware of how their body was engaged. However, while unaware of the act of singing, there is a memory of the appealing thoughts experienced. Is this like snoring and dreaming? When we are asleep we don't hear the sounds our bodies are making, but we are enjoying what is going on in our minds. But these singers are not asleep and their thoughts are not dreams. These are people in a church, with other singers, reading words from a page or screen, making sounds. Is it like daydreaming? Any sense of "being there" seems directed not by attention to space or time or body but only by attentiveness to thought. The mind is indeed active, but separated from any other consciousness. Singing in this state is not mindless; however, the singers are not minding their singing.

Un-minded singing as a pre-reflective "I can do it again," affords a fascinating contrast with extemporaneous (literally: out-of-time) speech.

> As we are undergoing speech, we do not experience both messages and meaning. Rather, the messages are simply experienced as meaning; they are thought itself, though in the mode of not being it…As we speak, we do not hear the noisiness of our own tongue as we do a foreign tongue. Instead, the noisiness is focally absent

> as we live speech as thought. Thought, as what is heard in lieu of the noises, is maintained and inseparable from acts of speaking. (Anton, 2001, p. 96)

When we speak extemporaneously, even though we are not thinking about the act of speaking, our very thoughts are engaged *as* speech (Anton, 2001). These experiences, extemporaneous speech and un-minded singing, are lived pre-reflectively but very differently. Both are funded by sedimentation – previously learned patterns of sounds – however, speech *as* thought is necessarily inseparable from the awareness of thinking, whereas un-minded singing or singing without thinking about singing appears as a sedimented "that which we have done already" (Anton, 2001). Thinking about singing is apparently not necessary to its replication; it has become by rote – "mechanical or habitual repetition" (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996). Like machines that have no thoughts, we can respond to a command and our singing is set in motion to proceed un-mindedly.

"Meaningless" words

> Sometimes, I must admit, I just sing the words. I'm just going through the motions, without really being deep in thought about the whole song. Other times I find myself sometimes so caught up in the music or trying to harmonize or read the actual parts of the music [the melody or harmony] that I lose the sense of what the words are saying. (Vince)

In this mode of (dis)engagement, there seems to be an awareness of the sounds of singing, of what is being sung, but not a significance of it, especially the words. It is possible that the narrative and emotive meaning of the words recedes into the background or becomes dissolved into some other kind of experience of meaningfulness that has less

to do with the words than with the more elemental significance of the singing experience itself. Perhaps when the hymnic quality of the text becomes more musical, then the "message" or the meaning content of the hymn or chorus loses its prominence.

> I really get "into" singing when I concentrate on God, but it's always a struggle for me at church. If I'm not careful, all of a sudden I'm singing not for worship, but because of the beat of the drum, the music. I get caught off guard and get really stimulated by the music. I get this high, this feeling of euphoria and excitement and I start to perspire. This happens at every church service. I can feel the beat in me. I try to control myself, even the clapping of my hands. I try not to get into this because I can get carried away with the music not thinking about God. (Tim)

Interaction with the creation of music itself or the execution of the music by accompanists can have a powerful effect. The physicality of music – the pulse, the movement – can evoke a bodily response that is so prominent that it overshadows all engagement with the text. The irresistible nature of this musical drive has resonance with the beat of a primal mechanism that sustains human life – a pulsing heart. This is much more than the unconscious tapping of the foot or hand to the beat of a song; it can become an invasion, a synchronized occupation of the body.

As noted before, Augustine (1997), as a listener to song, was also troubled by this contest between word directed towards God and the power of music. "When…it happens that the singing has a more powerful effect on me than the sense of what is sung, I confess my sin and my need of repentance, and then I would rather not hear any singer" (p. 230).

Modern worshippers experience musical distraction in this and other ways:

> In all honesty, I would have to say that sometimes I just can't sustain whatever the words are saying – I shouldn't say can't, I just don't. With many repetitions of a phrase or just a single word comes that danger of putting the mind on automatic pilot and sending it off into the mist somewhere while your emotions are vibrating or bouncing up and down because of the musical elements. You divorce your feelings from the ideas that produce them and then the feelings can become free floating things that ought to be cranked up irrespective of how they come. And so, by the repetition, it becomes boring. I then just sing the words largely for the feeling. So I now have a split. I'm singing one thing and if I really thought about it I might ask, "Are these words scriptural or true? I'm feeling so good because the tune is just carrying me along." I'd like the integration. I'd like to tie my good feelings to thoughts that I thought were good. (Edward)

Music by itself draws attention to itself as sound without any articulated reference that words bring (Ihde, 1976). We experience music alone and its "more powerful effect" in ways that transcend accurate description, as we quickly discover when we try, often in vain, to describe our feelingful responses to pure music: that is, music without words. But song is not music alone; song is the inseparable experience of music and word and in this marriage, many things happen to words when they are sung. Rock critic and author Greil Marcus posits that "words in songs are sounds we can feel before they are statements to understand" (quoted in Frith, 1981, p.14). So, in a strange way, words may turn wordless in song; they may lose their propositional linguistic significance. When we speak a sentence propositionally we may state, claim, argue, ask, or explain something; or we may urge, admonish, or persuade someone to do something. But in song, these

intentionalities may change. The words may become largely expressive and thus let go of their narrative or descriptive role.

> Singing enables us to step back from the word's immediacy as communication and to make it an aesthetic object; it allows us to contemplate and to celebrate the word rather than simply hear or speak it. It does not simply convey the word but places it in the context of "something for which there are no words." (Viladesau, 2000, p. 48)

Singing a song gives us an aesthetic and artistic location, a place for us as singers to engage in musical creation. It is true that the words of a song grant us a known vocabulary, a link to our life-world, a familiar utterance within the more mysterious and less definable musical realm. In this musical experience of vocal music, words sung sometimes seem to take flight, as if being carried on the melody. They are now sculpted and directed by the music, released from their everyday semantics. Singers give breath to this non-semantic freshness of sung words and in so doing are able to articulate some sense of meaning that is other than the word.

"Dispassionate" singing

> There are many times, probably most of the time, when I am just singing: enjoying the fact that I am singing, glad to be in church – all that positive stuff – but feeling nothing but this generic enjoyment. I could be singing about anything; it may as well not be a religious song because the rich, spiritual meanings of the texts are just not resonating with me. In my head, I believe the words I'm singing

> but I don't feel them in the way that tells me I am singing something special or connected to my spiritual life. (Betty)

It is also possible to sing being fully cognizant of some significance of the tune and text and yet not have an adequate feeling of the song. Can we uncover this sense of barrenness by exploring what is not there? How are we to understand the feeling that a song sometimes does not resonate? It would seem that for a song to resonate and produce a certain feeling, it must somehow be felt to have a deep inward trajectory in addition to the sense of singing out.

The Latin root of resonate is resonatia which means echo (Hoad, 1996) – a repetition of sound by reflection (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996).

> As a resonant appeal, feeling stands…between "reaction" and "rejoinder." It is too loosely connected to the occasion to be a reaction which is triggered directly, like a reflex. It is not simply induced (by a stimulus) and set in motion, as it were; rather, a quality "speaks" to the person and awakens a resonance in him. And, again, the feeling is too intimately connected to the occasion to be a rejoinder. The occasion does not first evoke a personal attitude, and it creates no problematic situation, but causes the person (though from a distance, like an echo) to resound. As a commensurate oscillation in which the whole man is involved, more deeply or superficially, more calmly or with greater agitation, feeling occupies the mean between reaction and rejoinder, the two types of response known to life. (Plessner, 1970, pp. 129, 130)

Ideally, the song is penetrating us, somehow addressing us and we are co-responding with and to the address. We want something of our being to sound back in an imitative

reply to what is being sung; we desire a parallel sounding of the sound, a sympathetic vibration to be sensed profoundly within us. It is feeling that the song is beyond merely knowing; it is in some way possessed by us and we are possessed by the totality of the song.

How then do we describe the opposite – this dispassionate mode of being-in-song-in-singing? It appears that the song does not adequately penetrate us or sing to us in the desired way. We sense that in the occasion of singing, we are responding differently than that which is called for in and by the song; we are not sung by the song. We are sounding, but not resounding from an adequate depth; but it is a safe and comfortable shallowness. Perhaps it is like having a polite conversation with friends about ordinary things – pleasant but not passionate. Do we not live most of our lives on this level? Perhaps there is an expectation that we as congregational singers will enter each song with the kind of vulnerability that allows the song to shape us, the singers, and our singing. A dispassionate singer apparently does not adequately experience this or allow this to happen.

"Into" Singing

> I was in church, singing the hymn, when from behind me came the most captivating voice. This woman was singing the hymn in such a way that I was melting! She seemed to be so enraptured with God, but not in a gushy sort of way; she expressed a meaningfulness that came from somewhere in her soul and that spoke to me more than what she was singing. (Don)

As we join in singing with the rest of the congregation, we give something of ourselves – at least our voice. However, when we hear ourselves or others sing, we have a notion about the quality of the singing voice as a depth of engagement. We might comment that the singing was not enthusiastic or, by contrast, they were singing with all their heart. When we really enter into singing, we dig deep within our cavities to change the spirit of our singing. Barthes (1985) calls this quality of engagement the "grain" of the voice: "The 'grain' is the body in the singing voice, in the writing hand, in the performing limb" (p. 276). This kind of involvement seems to connect to the song all that our being can offer: a presence that makes the song shine with human realness. Our singing becomes vibrant with the substance of our lived life. In so doing, the singer becomes an incarnation of the essence of the song.

The singer is in a dialog with the song; in singing, the singer is being sung. The song resonates with life, with the inner life of the world.

> It is the not the inner life of the self, but of the world, the inner life of things. This is precisely why the singer experiences inner life as something he shares with the world, not as something that sets him apart from it. As he sings (and hears himself sing), he discovers that the things of the world speak the language of his own inwardness and that he himself speaks the inner language of things. (Zuckerkandl, 1973, p. 23)

In singing the language of our inwardness, we are turned inside out, so to speak. What was inside is now outside, for all to hear, including ourselves. Our deepest emotions seem to be caught in the net of our singing and propelled to the surface where they are tossed in the waves of the song. It is a kind of confession, a public declaration of who we are as

bare, sung lives. As we sing in this way, together, we hear our vulnerability in each other's manifest humanity. "Deep calls to deep" (Psalm 42:7) and we respond in kind.

> I didn't want to quit singing that song; I wanted it to go on forever. I had no sense of time. I wanted to go to heaven right then. I had a mental picture of the angels around the throne of God. I was totally thinking of things outside myself. (Sue)

When we really "get into" singing a song, we sometimes seem to enter another place and another time. This other time is called into being by the very existence of the song and our permissive engagement with it. Schutz (1964) calls this other temporal realm the "inner time" of music. "Outer" time is time that can be measured by clocks or metronomes, that is, the time that the musician counts to assure the correct tempo or the measure of the duration of a song. Using outer time to measure a song from its beginning to end is a paradoxical activity. "We can only hope to measure it as it passes by, because once it has passed by, there will be no measuring; it will not exist to be measured" (Augustine, 1997, p. 262). By contrast, "inner time" is the step-by-step, ongoing articulation of musical thought (Schutz, 1964). This inner time is experienced when

> the consciousness of the beholder is led to refer what he actually hears to what he anticipates will follow and also to what he has just been hearing and what he has heard ever since this piece of music began. The hearer, therefore, listens to the ongoing flux of music, so to speak, not only in the direction from the first to the last bar but simultaneously in a reverse direction back to the first one. (Schutz, 1964, p. 170)

How is this kind of time consciousness in singing a communal song different from getting lost in a book, being engrossed by the flow of words from which we

construct the story? Reading a story silently has a different kind of temporal existence. We can close the book, thereby interrupting the flow of the story, only to open it later and re-enter the world created by our reading. The printed words are still there, unmoved. Singing in community, however, cannot be stopped in the middle of a song by our will. It travels having been given energy by many more than just one person. We can attend to it or not attend to it as it moves around us, through time. It is our choice, but we will be left behind if we ignore the sound experience – it goes on without us. Meaningful convocative coherence is given to singing together by this dependence on the temporal flow. Thus, the singing brings together into convocation those who practice it. Unfortunately, this rather mystical, convocative, musical time-travel is fragile and not always the experience of singers. As we have seen, we often just sing, not being moved by the song; we don't go anywhere. But within this convocation special things sometimes happen to individuals: a heightened awareness, a memorable, temporary mode of being-in-song-in-singing.

"Overwhelmed"

The church was filled with mostly college-aged youth. I was still in high school at the time. I remember that I was standing in the aisle, jiving a little, singing "We will worship" with my hands raised as if I was reaching up to heaven. At a climactic moment, I went up on my tiptoes, trying to reach as high as I could. I felt so engaged in the worship of the Lord that I wanted to reach higher. I had a feeling of awe; I wanted to see more, know more. I had an incredible peace and comfort but still that wanting of more. I was content with where I was at, but

> striving for more. It was an indescribably good feeling. The music ushered me into the experience. (Jim)

Here we see how singing seems to transform the experience of language by evoking a prelinguistic, more primal experience. The singer was literally ushered into an experience that transcends everyday reality, or perhaps he was propelled toward a more originary realm from which our everyday experience is transcendent.

> This was an extraordinary experience. I have had nothing like it before or since. I was in a large [youth] gathering and as I was singing over and over, "You are holy," I suddenly realized that what I was singing is what the angels are singing in heaven to God, as described in Revelations. It struck me so powerfully; I was taken by the truth of it. I wanted to be one of the angels. I started to cry, not a weeping cry but choking up. Then I lost my voice and I could not move. I was completely out of myself, not worried about anything. I was overcome, awe-struck in the true sense of the word. How I felt was not normal, but not wrong. I wanted to stay there. I didn't want to quit singing that song; I wanted it to go on forever. I had no sense of time. I wanted to go to heaven right then. I had a mental picture of the angels around the throne of God. I was totally thinking of things outside myself. (Sue)

While singing, this singer appears to have been completely captivated by something specific. The experience doesn't seem to be primarily about the musical aspect of song but a transcendental encounter with some aspects of words in the context of song. There is a profound, concentrated awareness of meaning that is outlined by a single phrase. The repetition of these few words seems to evoke a truth, an insight, the realization of which

propels the singer through the song and into a place defined by this truth. It is a parallel place where the same words are being timelessly repeated. The singer seems overwhelmed by the presentation of truth and the enactment of it.

How are we to understand this mode of being? Heidegger (1971) suggests that words call things into nearness by naming them, yet they are not present among us. This focused and enriched experience of the words is about some thing, some person, some place. But in repetition, their conceptual associations and their affective possibilities are compressed, amplified and transformed. This vision of truth has a dream-like expression; a truth articulated in such a way that all other ways of seeing are pushed aside. From this other point-of-view, vivid and deep feelings that surround truth form the central significance and meaningfulness of the song, not the immediate sonic environment. In this particular instance, these are notions of intense devotion and worship. Could feelings of human love, peace, joy, or a yearning for a great epic quest be evoked by other songs? Such an encounter with whatever truth is called and named seems to be a consummation, an affect of having sung a particular song, in a particular place, at a particular time.

George tells of his encounter:

> I have experienced something special while singing a hymn the choir has also sung: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." As this particular choir arrangement builds in crescendo towards the end of the piece, I just feel overwhelmed, almost can hardly sing, it touches me so. To a lesser extent there are times when the words I am singing with the congregation – hymns or gospel songs or choruses – do cause me to remember and reflect on God's love, or mercy, or power; on who God is and what he has done and these do touch me in a special way. I don't

expect it happen; it just happens. Tears come to the eyes and I feel like I almost can't sing; my breath is caught – taken from me. And it's not necessarily predictable. I'd be singing along and all of a sudden – wow! It's not just hymns; there are some choruses that move me more than others, for sure. There is a chorus that's in the hymnbook: *There is a Redeemer*. I just love that. Not to a major degree, but it always just sort of moves me and wow, it has such a meaning, such a promise to it. I love that when we sing it. Other times the same piece might not necessarily move me.

If these kinds of things didn't happen on a Sunday morning, I would still feel like I have worshipped. I'm not very emotional…at least I don't think I am…maybe I am more than I think I am…but I'm not expecting emotions to come out. Maybe that's the heritage I was brought up in – boys don't cry sort of thing; don't show emotion – that background. So I'm not expecting it.

Michael tells his story:

Maybe I'm a bit of a strange bird but for me the lyrics of the song are far more important than anything else and so I follow the lyrics of the song and allow what's being stated to draw me into the presence of God. And that's what I experience, whether it's in the more contemporary or the old hymn *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* or whatever it is. I suppose I take the words of the song as cues and reminders of what I know to be true about God. Take, for instance, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.* Simply seeing that text on the screen and singing the words reminds me that indeed God is a fortress, a protector and helps me deal with the warfare reality of my life and recognize God's presence in the midst of

> that. I think that just being reminded that way by the song makes it experiential then, for me. And I highly value having that cue: "Oh yes. This is true about the situation that I'm facing, that battle that I'm going through. God is with me in that." And as I have that drawn to mind by the song, I experience that: "Yes, God is here. He is with me." I guess it's a pretty awesome thing. It strikes me as incredible that the God of the universe would be with me in what I'm going through. It makes me feel awestruck, just overwhelmed. There have been times when I have simply stood and wept in a song. I'm not an overtly emotional person. On the outward appearance I'm calm and steady and even and what's going on is going on underneath the skin. So it doesn't happen often, but it does happen. It just happens. It has more to do with the text than the music. For example, I probably wouldn't notice that the organ was pumping it out any more than usual. The musical instruments are emotionally neutral to me I guess I'd say. I would simply be drawn in by the text of the song. I suppose what I might notice are my fellow worshippers coming to a crescendo with a statement like "Amazing love, how can it be…" and that would affect me.

These experiences seem to be given primary shape by the sung words; familiar, yet significant and richly textured words that sometimes bring what appears to be a powerful and welcome epiphany to some singers. The text of the song, deeply rooted in the singer, seems to bring to the surface a prior commitment to its truth. As such, the crisis moments that are experienced are not only sudden and important realizations or manifestations, they are epiphanies (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996), fresh glimpses of a Divinity (Hoad, 1996).

Such encounters in the context of Christian worship often seem to include an element of conflict for they constitute a clash; frail, human realities collide with the "otherness" of what is known of the Divine. The power of the impact can arrest and incapacitate the singer as breath is caught in the disturbance as if the life-force of song and singer has been interrupted. In these instances there is a sense of the immanence of the transcendent, a brief reconciliation with the irreconcilable. We seem to be overwhelmed by the vision of the impossible suddenly appearing to be possible.

Perhaps faith has become sight in these unexpected revelations; we catch a glimpse of what is usually veiled and in shadows. In this condition of openness, inconsistency is momentarily resolved in a welcome experience of the convergence of the divergent. As this kind of epiphany is an assuring reiteration of accepted truth that we struggle to live by, we may feel as if something new and strong has been infused into the hidden structures that give form to everyday realities.

Often, in these epiphanies, we are jolted from our normal mode of being-in-song-in-singing and we yield to what is more primal, loosed in an unstructured outpouring. Tears, though spontaneous, seem a most appropriate response because, in their ambiguity, they are able to articulate the paradoxical: joy and sorrow, doubt and certainty, frustration and satisfaction.

> Not all feelings can make us cry (as is shown by envy, hate, disdain and contentment, for example) but only those in which we become aware of a superior force against which we can do nothing. This awareness of our own impotence must take the form of feeling; it must take hold of us and grip us in order to trigger the act of inner surrender which causes us to weep. Feelings move us to

tears as ways of taking cognizance of and of being addressed by a threatening power, not as mere moods and inner agitations. Thus the superior force lies neither in the intensity nor in the centrality nor yet in the degree of excitation of the feeling, but in the "objective quality" to which it immediately binds us. (Plessner, 1970, p. 132)

"Uplifted"

I start singing, and as I get into the words and I let the words seep into where I'm at, I really feel connected with the Lord. I feel as if he's hearing me and at times I even can hear him say "Keep going. I like this" you know, within myself. Or sometimes it's just a spiritual gelling, where I just feel like we're glued together on this one. "You [God] and I are agreeing on this one and I really just want to give You the praise." And in return he gives me a filling, an ability to push out the crap that you come to church with. Everybody comes somewhere with crap. So, push that out and just fill me with him so that I'm a different person than when I come away than when I go. But that doesn't always happen unless the music…if there's no music, that won't happen. So that's very important that I need…I know I need music. I'm not somebody who can go with no music.

That being said, the words have to mean something to me and it can't be a dirge. It has to be…not light and fairy and airy. For example, there's nothing light and airy about the words of *Great Is Thy Faithfulness.* So it has to be that kind hymn where I connect with meaningful words. When I'm singing these, I know that parts of me have pushed out; I've pushed out what I have been worrying

about, what I would have been struggling with, things like where does God what me to go next? It doesn't matter at that stage of the game. It's been pushed out. It's a sense of abiding. It's a sense of umm…I've got through the frosting to the cake sort of thing and I'm just abiding in him.

It doesn't take me long to get there. Sometimes it matters whether I've prepared myself before I go to church, because I do that. I start in the shower and I kind of…I like nothing better than to wake up with a hymn on my mind; to me, it just kind of sets the day right if I can wake up singing a hymn or praising or…but I prepare before I go to church. Some of it entails talking to God. Some of it entails singing. Some of it entails just listening to a tape, depending on what space I'm in, what time of year it is, what you know… Some of it entails going for a walk, like early in the morning, on a Sunday morning. I'll often take my dog for a walk down by the river where it's quiet and there's nobody there. And I sometimes have a walkman with me and sometimes just sing at the top of my lungs because nobody's around and nobody cares. But it's a way of preparing to worship. So preparing myself...but music is a very important part to me. There'd better be music at my funeral. (Kate)

Another story:

So when I'm feeling down, sometimes those choruses perk me up. Probably more often than not, they do so while I'm singing them. Often I will be thinking about some line, let's say, in the chorus or maybe in the hymn too, which says something that isn't quite right, that hasn't got experience quite right. And at that point my thinking will, I think, if not supersede at least taint the feeling so that I

> say "I don't feel so good about that", and that particular line or that particular chorus may not lift me up as much as it might have, but generally I experience a feeling of uplift when I'm down. That's the wonderful thing about hymns; you can go to church and you can feel like warmed over dog food, but then by singing a hymn or chorus you can be transported, lifted up above your troubles. (Edward)

We bring to our times of communal worship many kinds of life circumstances and it has been demonstrated that these easily spill over into our experience of singing. But here, during singing, there is reported a clear change from an identified negative state to its opposite – from down to up, from bad to good, from junk to jewel. There has been some sort of trade. One thing did not lead to another; instead, a bad, old thing passed away and a good, new thing came in its place. Singing in this transactional mode becomes triumphant, not because it is an accomplishment in itself or that in singing we have earned a reward. This victory is more like the relief of basking in the sun after enduring long days of cloudiness and rain; it is not of our making but in it we are in some way remade. Our spirits are lifted with the clouds and we can see the expanse of our world in a new brightness that brings with it hope.

This gift comes in singing and the song defines the new place where we can stay for a while. But the words of this song must be "true" for us to feast on them. We can savour them and allow them to nourish only if we can recognize their worth. Perhaps this contingency can be likened to the sense of well-being made possible when we put on new clothes. If the clothes are the right size, style, and colour, we can literally get into them with ease and positive expectation. Once adorned, we look in a mirror and assess the effect. If every aspect of the garment is what we had hoped for, then we see our selves in

a new way, assured of a good difference given to us. But if, say, the jacket is not quite right, then our pleasure and confidence in the change are somewhat diminished.

While singing a happy, hopeful song, what happens to our troubles? They may seem to be removed from our consciousness, hidden from us, as in song and singing we embody another dimension of living most clearly defined by positive sung words. Being into the musical words and putting on their world, we are offered temporary relief from a confrontation with unpleasantness much like a tailor-made shirt beautifully covers blemished skin.

How can we account for people insisting on singing the blues? Why do many people lament in song? There must be some benefit to the exercise as not many people purposely create for themselves a deeper state of sadness. This kind of singing gives an aesthetic voice to troubling but true circumstances; they are not being avoided or sidestepped but reconfigured in song and singing. And because the sad song fits, it can be worn; we need clothes that suit every state of our affairs.

Despite the more negative content, this lifting experience might occur perhaps because it is inextricably linked to the act of singing. To sing is not to cry, speak or shout; singing feels, sounds and is produced in unique ways. Singing requires a deliberate change in the way we use our body – a special consciousness and intent. We breathe deeply and expel the air slowly to make melody. This is a transactional motion for we inhale silent air and exhale vibrant air made musical. A singing body changes words in special ways; we open our mouths with exaggeration and deliberateness to shape and deliver whatever the song requires of us. Compared to speech patterns, sung sentences can be elongated or made more compressed by the dictates of the melody. The pitch

inflections in the words are not entirely ours but are constrained by that of the song. The moods and meanings evoked by the words are shifted by the music and at the same time given a more permanent yet less defined state. As we sing, the experience of this altered presentation of words is enrichment, an expressive shaping directed by the music, allowing for the possibility of new insights. We can be transported above the mundane, lifted beyond the common language of everyday. In song we must become resonating cavities that create word-sounds larger and richer than speech or shout. This is an obligation given to us by song, and when we take up the transaction, we are changed. The change can be a sense of abiding, and to abide is to endure, remain, continue, dwell, remain faithful (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996). This is a resolve, a firm and hopeful place into which singing can lift us.

"Gesturing"

Singing is the only musical activity that does not require the use of hands or feet, therefore the limbs of the body are free to be used in other expressive activities. And so we have the possibility for multiple media such as song and dance routines, musical theatre and opera, or on a smaller scale, singers singing while playing the piano or guitar or other non-wind instruments. It is acceptable and common in the Western world for performing singers, like those in a choir or a congregation, to merely stand and sing, holding inactive the members of their bodies not necessary to the task. However, a good performer, an expressive chanteuse will most certainly be seen to move some parts of the body, at least hands and arms.

> Gesture…is a label for actions that have the features of manifest deliberate expressiveness. They are those actions or those aspects of another's actions that, having these features tend to be directly perceived as being under the guidance of the observed person's voluntary control and being done for the purposes of expression rather than in the service of some practical aim. (Kendon, 2004, p. 15)

Some singing worshippers feel compelled to express themselves beyond the voice by employing their hands.

> I think that the first time I really noticed people gesturing was going to places like camp and retreats and stuff with people my age. People at my church didn't really do it or I didn't notice it until probably high school. A lot of the people at camp were from other places, but I noticed with myself, if I do it at camp I wouldn't necessarily do it in my home church. I felt kind of stupid doing it at home and about how comfortable I felt around other people because people at home weren't doing it.
>
> After some time, I got more comfortable with it just because I saw it more often and it wasn't as weird of a thing and I kind of made myself do it sometimes just because I knew I needed to not worry about what other people were thinking. I was doing it because I was worshipping God. But there have been times when I felt like I was more doing it to show other people that I was worshipping God, but in the beginning it was just because I wanted to worship God myself.
>
> I lift my hands up, sometimes straight up and sometimes open palms in front of me. What I do depends on the song or what's going on in my head. If the song's talking about God as my father or something, then my hands and arms

might be straight up. If it's talking about wanting him to give me peace or blessings or something like that, then I probably have my hands out. I usually do this when the song starts getting more emotional, more intense which occurs most often in the repeated part of the song. Even if the band doesn't crank up the intensity, if I am in that place where I am just worshipping and it's just completely me and him, then I will still raise my hands. But the activity of the band definitely helps sometimes.

One time at the triennial [denominational conference], quite a few years ago – that's when I was really into lifting my hands and that kind of worship – I had this experience where I just knew that God was real and that God was there and I completely trusted him. So, knowing he was real and feeling this in that worship experience – I don't know how to explain how it feels – I had just kind of a sureness that he was listening. Because of that special time, lifting my hands has become more…um…just worshipping God than doing the actions for other people, although I do that too, at different times.

When I look at my friends, singing and raising their arms and stuff, sometimes I wonder what's going on their heads, because I know that some people do it just because they know they just want to look like they're….it's more like showing other people and sometimes it's not really just between them and God. And sometimes it's just because of the feeling with the music and stuff and so sometimes I wonder how much it means to them personally, if they're worshipping God or they're just doing the actions. Sometimes I just see people who look like amazing Christians when they are worshipping. Then, I see them

later and they're doing stuff that just doesn't honour God. So it makes me think, I guess. (Shelley)

Gesturing with my hands when I'm singing can mean, to me, surrender in a way. I think that it is important to sing with the congregation and that it is important to sing songs to God all the time, but to me, to raise my hands, things of that nature, is to give a more meaningful gesture than just "here I am, singing like I always do." In doing this I'm almost giving him [God] the words that I'm saying while my hands are raised. It varies when I actually do this. It's mostly when I find meaning that maybe I didn't realize before. And saying "Yes, God, this is what I've been trying to say." (Chelsea)

I raise my hands because I think that's a way of praising God. I do it palms up usually and I raise them above the shoulders. I believe from reading and doing some studying that it's honouring to him. And my whole purpose in life is to honour him. But I must admit that it's not as comfortable at this church as it has been at some of the other churches I have attended. How many people do you see in this church raising their hands? But I've gotten past that. I don't need to do what other people are doing, because my faith is not what other peoples' faith is – it's my own faith.

I sometimes raise my hand and there are times when I wouldn't. I do it when I really am communicating with God and that's what I want to say to him, or I'm asking him for something. It's kind of a way that I feel he can connect with

me. In some ways, raising my hand means that I'm committing to him or in submission, I'm asking for his blessing or that I'm giving him the praise that's due him. So it's openness both ways – not just receiving but giving. It has to be two ways. (Kate)

I find sometimes, watching the congregation, I get a little amused just thinking about how ironic it is, that, for instance, when we are singing a song that maybe was taken from a psalm of David and talking about jumping and raising our hands and shouting and dancing, everybody's standing there with their hands clasped behind their back and solemn looks on their faces and not moving at all. But, I'm not going to judge people for that because worship is a very personal thing, and if that's how you worship, I can't say that it's the wrong way to worship. However, it's not how I usually would like to worship. I like to move a little bit: my arms, move my feet, sway back and forth a little bit. My Mom worships at a church where they really express themselves physically while singing and I enjoy being there. I don't feel drawn to worship that way every Sunday, but I do like to move a little bit. When the song is talking about lifting my hands up or shouting or dancing, I feel like doing that and sometimes I do a little bit, but I feel a little funny being one of only one or two or three people in the whole room. But I do…I like to sometimes clap a little bit, or tap on the pew in front of me and wiggle around a little bit while I'm singing. (Laura)

We have already seen that when singing, it is common to feel more vulnerable than when talking; "[singing] draws a different sort of attention to the singer….Singing

seems to be self-revealing in a way that speaking is not" (Frith, 1996b, p. 172). And when we gesture while singing, we are exposing ourselves at an additional level, projecting another layer of meaning. Worshipping singers, who choose to use their bodies in this way, know that they are now spatially communicating – materially speaking.

> A gesture is at once an action and a mode of discourse. In the activities of caressing, waving farewell, and shaking the hand of a returning colleague, something is said in its being done. The "speech" of gestures is embedded in action. (Schrag, 1986, p. 37)

In worship, we may sing of a relationship with God; with our mouths we give praise, we adore, we petition. But gesture is a greater incarnation: it is a showing, a demonstration. Word has become flesh. What we sing is now made more real and less abstract, becoming a little more practice than theory. Action and words move the particulars of communication along the continuum from a thought, through a voiced intention to include some sort of doing. Although it may be a small action, gesturing lends credence to purpose, pointing forward to a more full enactment of voiced intention.

The singing voice is easily blended into the aggregate, one sound becoming lost among many. But if we gesture while singing in community, we move out from the anonymity of the crowd. Gestures are silent yet visible and thus reach further than the sound of a voice (Kendon, 2004). They are louder than the singing and comprise a more complete and more powerful proclamation, like underlining, *italicizing* or using UPPER CASE LETTERS. These give emphasis and strong exclamation without changing the vocabulary.

When we add gesture to song in corporate worship, we use more of our body to tell of our vertical relationship with God, but it is expressed within the horizontal connectedness that is the congregation. Perhaps gesturing singers are viewed as different in some way. Sometimes, if we are one of the few who gesture in a communal setting, we make ourselves a visible minority and we may feel threatened, vulnerable, having moved away from the crowd, not conforming to them but obeying an inner voice. We are willing to allow our body to shout above the song, using another, stronger kind of language. We are willing to act emphatically and risk being seen as ones who must really mean what they say. Now we may also be known as those who seem to have more to say than most and then held accountable for our shouting. It may be that in gesturing, the body speaks a different or unacceptable language compared to that of the song, and those who see it may become confused and distracted.

> Bodily comportments are not simply of expressions of internal feelings but are ways of 'understandingly-being-towards' disclosed entities and events. (Anton, 2001, pp. 43, 44)

This is especially true when one incorporates a gesture that has a commonly recognizable meaning. Tresidder (1997) writes that hands open and raised with palm upward has the universal meaning of blessing, peace and protection. When both hands are raised high, we adore, surrender and are receptive to celestial grace.

"Really worshipping"

When I'm worshipping, I'm paying attention mostly to the words that I'm singing and the sound of the song itself. I usually close my eyes; it's a way for me to kind

of tune out the people and the distractions that are going on around me. And I find that when I've got my eyes closed, I can focus much more on the words and just get to that stage of worship a lot more quickly. Basically, worship is when you get to the point when you're communicating with God rather than just singing for singing. There's a pretty fuzzy line there. But I think it's very possible to sing a lot of worship songs and never really worship. Part of knowing you've really worshipped is the feeling of being emotionally invested in what you are singing. And sometimes it's more cerebral than that; just kind of realizing that what you're singing is applying to yourself and to the way that you feel about God.

So, a good worship experience for me is when I feel like I've connected with God and when I'm not just singing the songs, but I'm singing the song for a reason. When I feel like I'm connecting with God, part of it is emotional. I may feel a lot of gratefulness. Sometimes there is a lot of guilt. It depends on the particular song and on how I'm approaching God that day. There are days I'm very joyful and there are days when I'm a lot more mellow. It's just like you can read the words and they're just words or you can kind of start to feel the words. It's hard to explain what you're feeling then. If you were to just say the words – I mean you probably could just say them and eventually you would feel like you were worshipping. But when you're singing them, you are allowed to pour so much more emotion into them. At least, for me that's the way I express myself emotionally.

With hymns it is much more about the words. There's a lot of powerful stuff packed in the hymns. I really enjoy singing them and un-compacting them

and really seeing what the words mean. And with choruses, it's much more of an emotional reaction. There's a lot of repetition and the first couple of times through…it takes a while to kind of switch from being aware of your surroundings to being aware of communion with God. So the first few times, I'm listening to people around me and listening to myself sing, then after I've had the repetition, I can tune that out and focus on actual worship. I think the repetition of the words play into my focus on worship. By the end I'm able to take the words and use those as my own, whereas at the beginning I'm just singing something that is in front of me. It's different with a hymn, when you've constantly got new things that you're singing about. Sometimes it's more difficult to get past listening to the words and music for itself, to get to the point when you're actually using them as communication. (Ruth)

When Dad used to come to the church I went to in Vancouver, he didn't like the repetition of the choruses at all. When we got to the second or third time through, he had the attitude, "We've sung this already." The point was done for him, while I was still in that feeling-out-the-song stage; maybe still thinking about things that were going on at work, thinking about the words themselves – not worshipping yet – and so I don't mind repeating as much. I should say that sometimes when you get to the fifth of sixth time, you're like, ok, it's gone on long enough. But I like it when a song repeats a few times. Part of that is because I really don't have a significant amount of musical talent, and when I can participate in a song more and continue to sing, I enjoy that. I can continue to sing it and continue to be a

part of the song and continue thinking instead of just reading some words on a page that I'm not familiar with and trying to figure out the hymns and the harmonies. (Norman)

And when it comes to singing worship songs, just singing them through once, I don't always have a chance to really meditate on the words. I find I can sing with much more feeling if I have a chance to kind of meditate on the words and really think about what they mean to me while I'm singing them. And so I find if we just go through a worship song once, it doesn't give me enough time to do that and if I'm singing out of the hymnal, concentrating too hard on reading the notes and getting the words right, then I find I don't have enough chance to do that either. Twice is good. Three times is better. Any more than that starts to get annoying. I just find that once I've kind of got it and felt it and I've got it out, and then…that's all I'm going to get out of it that day.

With the hymns, I guess the most important thing to me would be to sing for longer. Even the ones I don't like, if we were to sing them for longer, it would be easier for me to really get deeper into them. For some of them, the ones that only have three verses; they would be good to repeat. But the ones that have six verses; that would be a little much to repeat. But maybe even just to sing two or three in a row, that's good; that helps because if we just sing one here and do some other stuff, and then sing one there and do some other stuff, I find I feel very shallow in the hymns. To just sing for longer, I would really like that. (Laura)

> There are often times when I feel that this [song] is really saying what I feel. So I guess that's worship isn't it? It's an identification, it's a relating to what is being sung, and I think that can happen even when somebody else is singing and I really, really get into… [no words here]…I guess music is the ultimate worship experience in that I can really relate to what is being spoken, and that can take me into a worship experience. But music seems to have within it the elements that transport; even beautiful orchestral music or beautiful piano music can have a similar effect. I suppose it is getting out of myself and getting into a relationship with God. I guess it's more getting out of myself and into a spiritual relationship, another dimension. (Freda)

In these anecdotes the singers contrast "really worshipping" with "just singing." It appears that "just singing" is not merely a type of (dis)engagement with song, but apparently missing a major point or purpose of singing in the worship service. The singer, while just singing, is not experiencing on a satisfactory level what has been interpreted as connecting with God. The recipe for just singing seems to be: not being vulnerable to music, thus not being transported, not relating to the text, and not being able to sense that the song is really saying what I feel. Just singing is a lost opportunity for a central dimension of what has been presented and understood as the experience of worship.

Worship is homage or reverence paid to a deity, especially in a formal service and in its archaic roots, it meant worthiness, merit; recognition given or due; honour and respect (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996). In this modern enactment, worship appears to be a serious endeavour in which personal devotion is proclaimed, and in this act of proclamation, it is invested with individual significance. When worship is sung, it

becomes more than a song: it is a confession of a truth, a gathering of as much of self as can be expressed in sincerity and proclaimed in public to God with a sense of privacy appropriate to personal communion. And this conception of worship seems to be contingent, depending on whether or not the song and the act of singing it generates and reflects "how I feel" about God.

Really worshipping singers seem to experience something thoughtful and rich that is centered on and given form primarily by the sung word. This is a mutual investment as words are allowed to trigger a response from the singer, who then pours something of self back into the words as they are sung: sung words give impetus to feelings; feelings are given to sung words.

> [T]o sing words is to elevate them in some way, to make them special, to give them a new form of intensity. This is obvious in the use of singing to mark off religious expression from the everyday use of words. (Frith, 1996b, p. 172)

To feel words, sung or spoken, they have to be drawn near, brought within reach, grasped and admitted inside our various boundaries. When words are held at a distance, they are more likely kept outside, looked at, merely read and sung dispassionately or un-mindedly, not as easily gathered into deep significance. This is just singing in its various manifestations. But when we are able to more fully be-in-song-in-singing, the presentation of words is altered. In melody, word-sounds can be smooth or jagged, lie flat, move up or down or both, and they can change in duration and repeat in ways that would seem ridiculous if spoken. In a myriad of manners, song guarantees the delivery of its lyrics in a diversity of shapes, colours and contours. Transformed, they issue a clear invitation for sensitized singers to come near, to explore, expand and elucidate each

syllable, every vowel and consonant. As a result singers can delight in expressive exploration of words' nooks and crannies – feeling them. Singers who are really worshipping are purposefully singing, deliberately mining every word to discover a greater realization of its potential for feelingfulness.

> If we consider only the conceptual and delimiting meaning of words, it is true that the verbal form…appears arbitrary. But it would no longer appear so if we took into account the emotional content of the word, which we have called…its 'gestural' sense, which is all-important in poetry, for example. It would then be found that the words, vowels and phonemes are so many ways of 'singing' the world, and that their function is to represent things not, as the naïve onomatopoeic theory had it, by reason of an objective resemblance, but because they extract, and literally express, their emotional essence. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 217)

But even as the emotional essence of every word is being explored, song constrains the singer within the confines of its larger structural boundaries: phrases and sentences, verses and refrains. These limit meanings and bind the song to the singer, not as a restrictive event but as a recognizable episode about something that may be full of latent journeys into self and of whatever the song sings about. Every song in its totality can then become a portal to a somewhat more definable world of thoughts and sentiments.

It seems that many worshippers highly value words that speak quickly to them and through them, not demanding explanation or analysis. This is in contrast to a thick vocabulary which, when presented in a melody, becomes time-bound and often frustrating as it is inadequately apprehended and comprehended: it is too much, too fast. But when words in song are perceived to be immediately accessible, hospitable and

familiar they can be welcomed as native tongue. In that moment of encounter, sentiments may be more easily aroused by all of what the song is and says, for within many worshippers lie named, recognized feelings that await animation by the singing of song. However, song can also outline un-nameable feelings; possibly it is in this capacity that the music has more power than the word. In both instances, what is sung with feeling may now effortlessly resonate with the substance of one's life and the song becomes my song given.

Reiteration draws attention. For some singers, repeating the whole or part of a song creates unnecessary or unwelcome interest. For example, if, after the first pass, the words are found to be too familiar, trite and shallow, or even immediately satisfying in their eloquence, a second incantation may be a pointless exercise. For others singers, repetition presents an opportunity for further discovery. It draws out a song, offering more time for participants to be in the song. As well, the song can now draw out from each singer new import, extra insight and added awareness. Some worshippers need this time for words to evolve; for ideas to become expressions of self, for voiced feelings about God to be personally felt and then authentically sung to God in and as worship. Actual worship apparently is achieved when the sung words are able to be possessed, felt and offered wholeheartedly to God as a personal communication.

Ricoeur (1991), in analyzing readers' responses to story, describes what he calls appropriation.

> [A]ppropriation is the process by which the revelation of new modes of being…gives the subject new capacities for knowing himself. If the reference of a text is the projection of a world, then it is not…the reader who projects himself.

> The reader is rather broadened in his capacity to project himself by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself. (p. 97)

Although worship song is not usually in narrative form, it does project a world of concepts and worshipful sentiment about and towards a Deity and calls the singer to a state of agreement and feelingfulness, a place where one can really worship relying on a sensitive awareness of one's enlarged, in-the-moment mode of being.

It is clear that singing and song provide both the means and the matter for worship. Perhaps an effective worship song can be likened to a church window of stained glass, a casement of multi-shaded expression through which the Divine is sought, adored, celebrated, petitioned. It may contain the substance of worship: the scene, the characters, the gestures, the intentions. Sometimes it may be conceptually vague, abstract, while in its form it furnishes rich layered implications.

A stained glass window has many shapes, textures and hues that are subtly dependent on light seen through and brought toward. Its effectiveness depends on from where we see or our point of view – like knowledge and experience that filters and tints meanings. We are able to worship by virtue of our position and our response. When standing before such a luminous scene, we can bathe in its light; our own bodies bear and absorb its colours, and we may see ourselves as partakers of and participants in the representation. As the transformed and transforming light is splayed upon us, we may be changed for the moment, or perhaps forever. And so it is when singing-in-song-in-worship.

Some worshippers need to feel secluded, alone with God in the crowd. As reported: "I usually close my eyes; it's a way for me to kind of tune out the people and the distractions that are going on around me." Another congregant similarly said:

> I quite often close my eyes, presuming I know the words and the music, because I can block out what's around me. I really don't care who's there. And I sing as if I don't care who's there, because I'm not singing for you or them; I'm really singing for the Lord. (Kate)

There is irony here. Eyes are closed to shut out all of the other singers who are necessary for the occasion of singing in a worship service. But at some point in time, they apparently become a distraction for a really worshipping member whose goal appears to be a private, inner awareness of communicating to God the personalized feelings named in the communally sung words.

How are we to understand the sense of being alone with God while singing with others? Part of the feelingful response to a song is a product of singing in a group. We have all experienced the effect of communal emotion – we laugh more heartily at a TV comedy when we are watching together with friends than when we are by ourselves. Likewise, the point of the laugh track provided by the producers of the program is to offer the illusion of not being alone in our amusement. Somehow, a group can supply additional inspiration upon which we draw for richer participation in an event. Inspiration is defined as "a supposed force or influence on poets, artists, musicians, etc., stimulating creative activity, exalted thoughts etc." (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996) but we know that this extends far beyond the so-called creative community named. For anyone to really worship, it is evident that the content of the songs sung must be inspiring: able to

stimulate exalted thoughts and feelings. As well, the intent of the singer should be to ascribe honour to God: worship. With these in place, even though singers seem to want to ignore other singers, the context of this activity remains communal and thus influential.

But the intentional awareness of the worshipper has been shifted. Like a zoom lens, the focal point excludes all but the subject; everything else is on the periphery, present in the reality outside the lens, but unseen within its bounds. Self and sentiment "about" seem to be all that is of consequence: my words, how I feel. The wonder of us before God, the multi-voiced local community that has been called into being seems to be merely a setting that allows the individual to begin the journey towards communing with God privately. Many singers achieve a state of feeling something that is interpreted as an individual connection with God, a sense of personally communicating, of singing alone to Deity. The link becomes perceptible once the singer has entered this mode of being called really worshipping that appears to depend on the worshippers' ability to respond to the evocative power of a song – words and music. As feelings are felt and expressed, they are turned towards God, each worshipper believing him to be listening, hearing not just my song but the depth of personal significance I have given to the song and my investment of my sentiment. Emotional arousal seems to be the gauge by which each worshipper measures his or her sincerity.

Conclusion

From the witnesses who have spoken of their experiences as congregational singers, we know that singing is not merely the production of songs by vocalists. Singing involves the singer in multi-layered interactions with and around music and word, content

and context, attention and intent. Such interactions may produce in each singer actions and reactions that are subtle, interior, deeply felt, or, perhaps minimally felt or little response other than producing sound. Outward manifestations inspired by song and singing may be a smile, a raised hand, a tapping foot or simple sentience. But all of what is experienced by the singer is not necessarily evidence of purpose, for in a church service, singing is not just singing. Singing and worship seem to be phenomena that are intertwined. For each singer, one challenge appears as a need to know, in some manner, that in the moment of singing, what is inside is the same as what is outside; that what is sung is what is felt to be real and expressed authentically in and as worship. In this sense, each congregational singer is in his or her own reality, alone in the crowd but nonetheless necessary to the union that is the communal voice. How, then, is the desire to be authentic in voiced worship realized by those who participate in congregational song? This question is pursued in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 – Congregational Singing: Authenticity and Performance

In this chapter, I explore the concepts of authenticity and performance in rather narrow ways in keeping with the personal nature of the lived experiences. The notion of authenticity as described by congregational singers in a church service is construed as having to do with a personal sense of well-being that is rooted in an assurance that singing and worship spring from the heart and is given in a manner that reflects the real me. Performance, as a concept discussed in this chapter, is likewise circumscribed by an individual and musical focus, a kind of giving of music that in the context of communal worship, is giving to God in the company of others. While I take into account the "actions, skills, traditions and works" (Godlovitch, 1998, p. 50) that constitute a musical performance, the emphasis is on the purpose or telos of music-makers in a church service. In telling of the various modes of being-in-song-in-singing, congregational singers often describing a struggle in their efforts to focus on God and worship as they understand it. Often when congregational singers speak of performing or a performance in the context of worship activity, it is in negative terms and almost always as an accusation made against a Worship Team. Such a charge is usually founded on the perception that the purpose of the up-front musicians appears to have shifted from humbly giving their music to God to impressing people.

Do congregational singers perform for God? Do they see themselves as performers? How do the musician-leaders view their role in congregational singing? What is the nature of the relationship between the worship team or organist and

musicians in the pew? Are there stylistic, theological, conceptual and pragmatic constraints on the congregational singers and their leaders within a worship environment that shape the perception and production of communal music? If so, can these be described in terms of authenticity and performance?

The Congregational Singer

Congregational singing, in the context of a Sunday worship service, offers the worshippers the opportunity to sing together and presupposes that all will sing the same song at the same time. There is a great advantage for individuals to sing in a crowd as opposed to sing alone (or even more nerve-wracking, being amplified while doing so). Singing alone can be a potentially frightening experience as explained by Frith (1996b):

> Most people are happier to talk in public than to sing; singing (in a seminar, for instance) is a source of embarrassment…Most of us experience singing (unlike speaking) as a *performance* (to see this just visit a *karaoke* bar)…it draws a different sort of attention to the singer, hence the embarrassment. Singing seems to be self-revealing in a way that speaking is not. (p. 172)

> Singing seems both less natural than speaking (involves a different, less familiar sort of self-consciousness) and at the same time more natural – more bodily, more exposing, more revealing of who we "really" – naturally – are. (p. 173)

Singing in a crowd offers some shelter from embarrassment as a single voice becomes just one element of the aggregate. As well, over the centuries, singing in church with others has been normalized, and so it is not usually an activity that draws attention to

individuals who choose to participate. However, the possibility for self-revelation and self-expression is still present, even though the performance is a group effort. Congregational singing and its attendant expressive modes is a fragile activity as each individual singer attempts to find his or her authentic worship voice within the communal setting. In his analysis of self and authenticity, Anton (2001) says,

> Selfhood, as negotiated in immediate encounters with others, is fundamentally inseparable from the intentional comportments and material practices that are opened for self inscription. (p. 69)

The reciprocal influence of individuality and community is especially interesting in observing the material practices in a multi-generational blended worship environment and the intentions expressed by individuals. In the case of the church congregation under study, with its two distinct types of song offered in two distinct ways, both the decision makers and the congregants acknowledge that among the people present in the services there are preferences for one type of song over the other, but it is assumed that all will participate in both to some degree. What, then, is the experience of the worshipper as she or he is called upon to offer praise to God in a way that may or may not be true to oneself? Why is this an important issue? In what ways do singers resolve conflicts?

To sing or not to sing

Charles Taylor (1991) describes what he terms a "culture of authenticity" (p. 17) as he observes it in contemporary society. In his discussion, he argues that the currently popular principle of authenticity is deeply connected to the individualism of self-fulfilment that proclaims that

> everyone has a right to develop their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value. People are called upon to be true to themselves and to seek their own self-fulfillment. What this consists of, each must, in the last instance, determine for him- or herself. No one else can or should try to dictate its content. (p. 14)

Inherent in this quest is the need to express or give some form to one's sense of an authentic self.

> There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way and not in imitation of anyone else's. But this gives me a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life, I miss what being human is for *me*.
>
> This is the powerful moral ideal that has come down to us. It accords crucial moral importance to a kind of contact with myself, with my own inner nature, which sees it as in danger of being lost, partly through the pressures towards outward conformity, but also because in taking an instrumental stance to myself, I may have lost the capacity to listen to this inner voice. (pp. 28, 29)

How this contact with the self relates to congregational singing has many layers. For example, the "quest for authenticity" (Taylor, 1991) is an important consideration in the mind of Brian, the leader of the Worship Team at Eldridge:

> I'm interested in seeing people feel like they can express themselves in any number of ways…if somebody decided that "No, I'm not going to fit in, this is what I want to do, this is what's going to be meaningful for me today." Great!

A comment made by Henry, a congregant, to Mary, the leader of worship, reveals that choosing whether or not to participate in communal singing – fit in – is important to his sense of authenticity and also has a moral dimension. He stated to Mary that he won't sing hymns because "I just don't like them. It makes me feel like I'm being hypocritical to sing them." In adopting this attitude, he is assuming that singing in a church worship service requires him to be honest in terms of how he is feeling and how he is discerning his contact with his inner nature. In this case, what the inner voice is saying is not linked to the truth of the content of the hymns and his acceptance of it, but to being true to oneself as defined by a personal preference and the danger of being hypocritical, which is at heart, giving an impression of the self that is untrue.

One way to interpret what is being articulated in this instance is that some singers experience a felt wariness of being called upon to carry out a duty that may violate in some way the real me. I will show that viewing congregational singing through the paradigm of performance uncovers and explicates many of such tensions felt by singers as they are confronted with songs and singing and contingencies related to this sense of personal authenticity.

Mark (1981) argues that a performance of music is characterised by "assertion" with the "intention" that the performance is understood as being "true." He points out that this is analogous to a certain kind of quoting and begins his explanation by using the example of speech.

> A great deal of our linguistic activity in ordinary life consists of asserting. That is, we utter sentences that admit of truth or falsity, and we utter them with the intention that, whatever other effects on our listeners they may have or be

> intended to have, they will be taken as purporting to be true instead of false. The circumstances where this is not the case – i.e., where we utter sentences admitting of truth or falsity but without this intention – are comparatively rare…nevertheless, however rare, such cases are perfectly conceivable…when the sentence uttered is a quotation. (p. 314)

In continuing his exploration of quoted speech, Mark refers to singing a pre-composed song (musical quoting) and the danger of the song being too well-known and because of this familiarity, often being given by rote (see Chapter 4, the modes of "Just singing"). For singing to be considered a "performance," a deliberate focus is needed that encompasses assertion.

> Once a person knows the jingle [song] by heart and can repeat it…it becomes hard to utter the words any way except mechanically; in order to assert the sentences of the jingle, a special sort of concentration is required.
>
> [I]n musical performances we do quote; most performances are performances of previously composed works…Now, through practice one acquires a set of extremely specialized motor habits. But this makes it possible that [for a pianist] one's fingers may hit the right notes through habit alone, completely mechanically, just as one can utter words of a well-known nursery rhyme [or sing a worship song or hymn], with no attention to the sense of what one is doing. In such a case…one has ceased to perform the music, just as in the mechanical utterance of some words known by heart one is no longer *asserting* anything… the more fully developed one's motor habits, the greater danger of playing by habit alone. (p. 315)

> [P]erformance is not an assertion *about* the work but an assertion *of* it…It is possible to utter words one does not understand, and words to which one attributes no meaning. But *assertion* is not possible in such a case: for assertion the words must be taken to have some meaning, not just in the external sense of believing them to be meaningful but in the sense of feeling oneself in possession of the meaning. This is necessary because an assertion, as we have seen, is intended to be taken as true; it is this intention which makes it an assertion. (p. 316)

Mark's concept of the assertion of a sense of truth as a condition of performance can be most appropriately applied within the context of worship activity and is linked with Taylor's explanation of authenticity of being true to ourselves, in how we live out our lives in the context of singing songs of worship. The assertion *of* the song, the sense of truthfully being "in possession of its meaning" brings us to the tenderness of the inner voice.

In the example under discussion, (Henry won't sing hymns because "I just don't like them. It makes me feel like I'm being hypocritical to sing them.") despite the probable truth of the words and the possibility of asserting them as true in themselves, the inner voice proclaims that personal significance is not connected to this truth of the words but is connected to the ability to posses them. (See Chapter 4, "Into Singing") The assertion of the song with the inherent intention that it be understood as true is contingent on the inner voice. Because "I don't like" hymns, any possibility of authentically singing or in Mark's terms, performing them, is precluded (in this case an entire genre – hymns). Said another way, in the context of worship, the possibility of an assertion of the song as

being true is rejected because the song style is disconnected from the true self, therefore it cannot be performed. Personal authenticity is trump.

Henry has excluded an entire genre of song because of his dislike for it. In making personal authenticity the issue, his rejection can be justified by a statement of personal taste. Although musical taste is a complex topic that is beyond the scope of this project, it must be said that, according to Brown (2000), "taste primarily has to do with aesthetic response and responsiveness" (p. xi). To dislike a particular song says nothing objective about the qualities and characteristics of the song itself, but is a product of self-referential judgement. When a singer determines that he or she is unable to respond to a song, the answer to the question of "why" is often difficult to articulate. Some of these complexities have been explored in earlier sections (e.g. "Really Worshipping"), and here we see that singing a song that is disliked locates the singer in an inauthentic place and is a reason for not singing.

Referring to the congregational singers as "performers" is problematic as in much of the literature concerning church music, what the congregation does in singing is commonly referred to as "participation" or "liturgy" (the work of the people) and often juxtaposed to the inactivity of being an audience to the performance of others such as a choir or a soloist. Conway (2006) describes this as something that must be vigilantly managed.

> There should be a place for both participation and performance in the worship of the church, but the tension between the two must be thoughtfully maintained. To eliminate performance [by specialists] might be to exclude meaningful opportunities for experiencing new forms and styles of music or for modeling

> musical excellence. To minimize participation [by the congregation] would be to deny worshippers their duty and right to praise the living God with their own hearts and voices. (p. 14)

I contend that this juxtaposition of participation and performance is too stark, for it does not allow for a deeper sense of the experience of the congregational singer. Participation is "taking a part, sharing in something with others" (Pearsall and Trumble, 1996) and this can be achieved without any consciousness of being seen or heard by anyone who is outside the activity. As such, it does not assume any obligation to an audience; the obligation is primarily to sharing in the task. What differentiates a musical performance from mere participation is the foreknown presence of an audience for whom the participants in the task have prepared and for whose benefit their efforts are given (Godlovitch, 1998). However, what congregational singers and their leaders-accompanists do in a worship service cannot strictly be called a "typical" performance (Godlovitch, 1998, p. 43) primarily because there is no purely listening audience bodily present to whom the performers reach out and for whom they have prepared.

Kierkegaard (1948) addresses this condition, conceiving relationships in worship using the paradigm of a theatrical drama. In the context of a congregation listening to a speaker deliver a sermon, he explains:

> They in the secular sense look upon the speaker as an actor and the listeners are theatergoers who are to pass judgment upon the artist. But the speaker is not the actor – not in the remotest sense. No, the speaker is the prompter. There are no mere theatergoers present, for each listener will be looking into his own heart. The stage is eternity and the listener, if he is the true listener (and if he is not, he

> is at fault) stands before God during the talk. The speaker whispers the word to the listeners. But the main concern is earnestness; that the listeners by themselves, with themselves, and to themselves, in the silence before God, may speak with the help of this address. (p. 180)

> In the theatre, the play is staged before an audience who are called theatergoers; but at the devotional address, God himself is present. In the most earnest sense, God is the critical theatergoer, who looks on to see how the lines are spoken and how they are listened to: hence here the customary audience is wanting. The speaker is then the prompter and the listener stands openly before God. The listener, if I may say so, is the actor who in all truth acts before God. (p. 181)

Kierkegaard's metaphor is often referred to by writers on Christian worship (see for example Conway, 2006; Hustad, 1993; Liesch, 2001) as an antidote to the tendency of a congregation to willfully be or become an audience – mere listeners – within a worship service. Kierkegaard's relational conception clearly places the congregation in the position of performers (metaphoric actors) for God, even while listening to a speaker. The speakers-leaders are seen as prompters to the crowd at centre stage and are secondary players upon whom the congregational actors-performers are dependant for cues. Kierkegaard also gives great personal responsibility for "earnestness" and communion with God on the part of the individual congregant-performer as he or she responds to the promptings of the leaders. The congregants concern for attention to the inner voice that may become the arbiter of a sense of authenticity in singing mirrors Kierkegaard's notion that the performer must act "in all truth" before the all-seeing, all-knowing God.

Keeping in mind Mark's (1981) explanation, there is in performance an assertion intended to convey that is it true. One can argue that mere participation is therefore not necessarily a performance. However, it is possible to participate in a performance; the intention and assertion of the truth of it makes the difference. "Just Singing" (Chapter 4) with its modes of (dis)engagement can be located in the category of participation, while "Into singing" (Chapter 4) with its more focused experiential aspects, moves participation into the realm of performing.

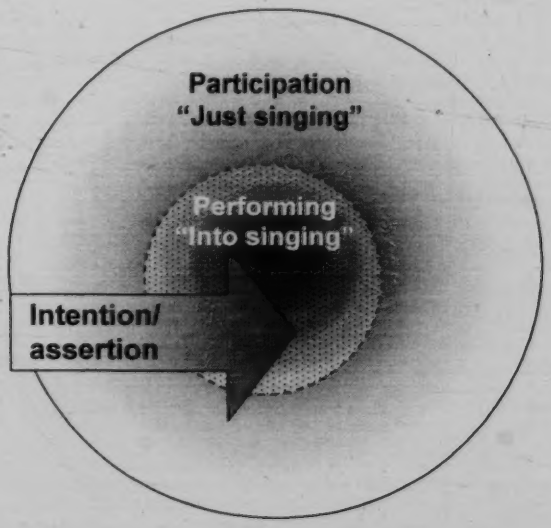

Figure 1: Participation and performance

Cone (1974) suggests that honesty of expression (or performance) is most easily achieved when singing hymns and other "natural" or "functional" songs.

> The hymn [or chorus] is a good example of a class that I call *functional song* to which dramatistic analysis does not apply. Functional song is a variety of what might be thought of as natural song – natural, that is, as opposed to artificial (or artistic, if you prefer). Now, one distinguishing mark of natural song is that its

> vocal persona is not a dramatic character: the persona is an aspect of the actual singer at the time of singing. In functional song, the singer expresses himself directly as a member of a specific community, engaged in performing a task, or taking part in a ritual, or assisting at a social event. Think, for example of the occasions on which we sing "Happy Birthday to You." This useful composition is a paradigm of functional song. It marks the observation of a social form. Everyone who sings it means it, or pretends to mean it. No one imagines himself to be the poetic-vocal persona of the song – each person *is* the persona. (p. 49)

And so, according to Cone's analysis, there is a kind of song that is most suitable for self expression, where a sense of authenticity is more easily achieved: it is one that requires of the singers nothing other than being themselves, echoing Taylor (1991). However, if one is unable or unwilling to engage the song in this authentic manner, we have seen that one option is not to sing.

However, according to Cone (1974), when singing a functional song, some singers may "pretend to mean it." In fact, this is the experience of some worshippers.

> When a song doesn't connect, when I can't identify with what is being offered, then it becomes more of an exercise and just singing despite the song. There are some songs like that. I was at a church and they were singing a song about "God is on the line; call him up. Call him up tell him what you want." And it was just horrible. Those words were so bad. So at that point it was fun to sing – it was a very fun song to sing. But, you know, I distanced myself from what the song was saying. Part of me was just laughing at this ridiculous song and I was actually a little bit offended by it because it makes God sound like a magic genie that you

> can rub and out he pops. I was hoping that that was not what people were thinking about. (Ruth)

Here is an example of a congregational singer who seemed to change her intention and assertion because she could not sing the given words with any kind of endorsement of their veracity; to do so would violate her integrity and thus be inauthentic. However, she could and did sing for fun. When she ascertained that what the song was saying about God was, in her opinion, not objectively true, she engaged in the act of singing on a level of enjoyment, excluding from her thinking any truth of the song necessary to make it a performance given for the worship of God. The meanings of the words became significant, but in a negative way. They were not missed by the singer, but noticed and actively rejected, judged to be trivial and therefore factored out for attentive engagement. Now, being wilfully stripped of their propositional weight, the words did not matter. It appears that such banalities are best given over to become little more than enjoyable sound indistinguishably merged with their musical vehicle.

This subtle adjustment in the conscious apprehension of the song apparently satisfied the singer and enabled her to sing in a way that was right for her. In the context of worship, the possibility for authentic performance was seriously questioned and answered by adjusting her assertion of the truth of the song and her intention for it to be given as worship; it became fun even though the song was about God and a relationship with him. This process brought the singer to the point of authenticity. Personal enjoyment apart from a larger "horizon of significance" (Taylor, 1991) accommodates this particular song within the value system of the singer as over-against the communal purpose.

At the time of her personal modification, this singer held some concerns regarding the authenticity of the participation-performance of others. She apparently was not concerned that in her own singing she would be seen by these others as "pretending to mean it." Her adjustment was completed within herself to her satisfaction, and there is no way to gauge whether or not her outward manifestation gave evidence of her attitudinal change. She sang with enjoyment.

Brian, the Worship Team leader at Eldridge, outlines another tension created when worshippers are called upon to sing words that which may not be true:

> In singing a song or in speaking a text, often there's an opportunity to participate in a sentiment or a claim that it might be difficult to participate in, in a strictly rational sense. If we had to build that sentiment from the ground up out of our own experiences, good grief…I've had experiences where people are encouraged [by the leader] to really mean what they sing. I think it's valuable to have people think about what they sing, but I think at least a measure of the value of songs is that we can come to mean what we are singing as opposed to having to bring to that song a readiness to be able to participate in it as a symbol. So that always bugs me when they say, "Do you really mean what you are singing," and then read the text back to people and browbeat them because, well, no, they don't in a lot of cases. Maybe they're not in a place in their Christian walk to be able to claim that kind of security or that extent of love or devotion, but….give people a break.

Often the content of the song and the commitment to which the singer is invited to give assent is much more than can be realized in the moment or even in the immediate

future. "I give You my all" and similar sentiments, which are quite common in evangelical songs of all styles, vow a complete and utter surrender of self to God. Given the ultimate nature of these statements, does the singer recognize these voiced commitments as too big for comprehension of all the implications for consciously living them out in day to day reality? Can the singer sing with a sense of authenticity or should he or she not sing as a gesture of integrity?

Derrida (2003) contends that inherent in pledging oath-like statements is the certainty that there will be moments of betrayal: that life is contingent, that circumstance and people change, making reaffirmation necessary and different.

> The 'yes' to the marriage, the performative 'yes' – 'I do,' 'I do.' This 'yes' has to be repeated differently each time. If it's simply a record saying 'I do' 'I do' 'I do' there is no fidelity. For this 'I do' to be a renewed promise it has to be different each time, the same one and different…the fact that this 'I do' is different, to some extent, means at the same time fidelity and betrayal. Indeed, it's a kind of perjury to say 'I do' to someone…You have to betray in order to be truthful…The perjury is part of the process. It is not an accident which corrupts the promise; it's *part* of the promise. (pp. 11, 12)

It is possible that such statements of ultimate commitment sung in church are apprehended as expectations of our continuing response to God. They are grand intentions, declarations of a direction rather than of an existential reality and at the same time an acknowledgement of the difficulties inherent in their fulfillment. "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24, New International Version). Even in the face of conditional truth and falsity, they are not hollow statements but ones filled with

ambition. We aspire to bring them to reality; at present they are felt desires projected from now, with all of its sure uncertainty, towards a more confident future. And perhaps it is hope – the expectation of something good – that gives us boldness to reiterate the pledge. On each occasion that we sing these aspirations, our repetition is surrounded by a different lifescape. It is the latest accumulated backdrop against which echoes each unique "yes," gathering within its voice the timbre of a new reality and its dark overtone of betrayal. And even as each stained song is released, it is done with resolution and reaffirmation, accompanied by a re-feeling of the hopeful desire and thus maintaining its directive impulse for labyrinthine lives. As we sing within this view of reality, we do so with confidence in our selves as contingent performers.

Individuality and originality

A significant component in the popular version of authenticity is originality of expression. Taylor (1991) observes our highly individualized culture and states the generally accepted view (and refuted by him in his discussion) that

> being true to oneself means being true to my own originality and that is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own. (p. 29)

Allied with the idea that there is a way of being that is "properly my own" is what Taylor refers to as

> a new understanding of art…If we become ourselves by expressing what we're about, and if what we become is by hypothesis original, not based on the pre-

> existing, then what we express is not an imitation of the pre-existing either, but a new creation. We think of the imagination as creative. (p. 62)

Can this view of creative originality appear in the exercise of congregational singing, which is by its very nature a communal activity, requiring some degree of conformity in order for it to have any sort of communicative potential? For a song to be sung by all in one place at the same time presupposes a structure that is imposed on the group. While elements of a song may be deemed to be open to original creation or recreation, these must be realized in and around some predetermined aspects of the pre-existing song.

> The very idea of originality and the associated notion that the enemy of authenticity can be social conformity, forces on us the idea that authenticity will have to struggle against *some* externally imposed rules. (Taylor, 1991, p. 63)

For congregational singers to experience, articulate and discover this sense of authenticity – their individual originality in an expression that is unique to the self – requires maneuvering within the song form and among the group of singers that express that form.

Within the Eldridge worship service, two distinct kinds of song material are engaged in: hymns and choruses. And even though the texts of both these two broad categories are projected on the overhead screen in the same way, how they appear on paper and are musically realized by the accompanying musicians and the congregation present some contrasts. I will attempt to show that these differences revolve around the nature of the broadly defined genres or forms – hymns and choruses – and the ability of each form to offer the participant-performer the opportunity to create an original expression, something that is deemed to spring from and reflect each singer's true self.

Hymns are referred to as those songs that appear in the hymnal. They exist in a printed form that defines all of the musical elements necessary for the realization of the song. The melodies are written out with supporting harmony which is designed to be played by a keyboard accompaniment as well as offer to the singers the option of singing one of the four parts: melody, alto, tenor or bass. At Eldridge, with the endorsement of the leadership, the hymnals are available to all of the congregants as an alternative to following just the words that are projected on the screen.

To some singers, this is a valued option. George says: "I prefer to use the hymnal. I feel more comfortable singing harmony than melody in many of the hymns, so I'll use the hymnal so I can get the music." By using the hymnal, a singer has the opportunity to sing harmony which is a notated, pre-determined musical line other than what is the most defining and remembered aspect of a song – its tune. In escaping from the most popular communally voiced expression, the melody, one is able to make a contribution that is different in substance from the ordinary and often the majority. This choice may be practical; finding a place in the music where the vocal "fit" is better, that is, singing within one's own vocal range. Singing in this manner can give the singer more of a sense of at-home-ness, granting a feeling of physical comfort in that now the singer is expressing his or her voice as it is and at its best, not being forced into a range where it will not shine.

When one can see in a hymnal the entire music notation, that is, all of the pre-approved possibilities, some singers enjoy the flexibility of creating or re-creating within all of this harmonic potential.

> Sometimes I want to sing the tenor, sometimes I want to sing the bass, sometimes I just want to harmonize and do something different to take away the drudgery of singing the same old thing all the time, which is kind of meaningless. (Ken)

This singer, if only for himself, displays his vocal and music reading ability in being able to sing every part. In doing this, one creates adventure and exploits one's own expressive potential by exploring the limits of the harmonic possibilities given in the printed song. This originality is in the moment, an attempt to make new the experience of singing at a particular time, avoiding a habitual recreating of the ordinary, that which is normally done. Meaningfulness is found by not accepting that a song is a fixed entity having only one or two vocal spaces with personal creative possibilities; it is in the accomplishment of performing the song in a variety of ways that this singer is free to choose by virtue of the breadth of his particular vocal range. However, these choices are within the bounds of what has been pre-established and visually apprehended as the harmony assigned to the song. Other singers see opportunity for education and personal musical growth.

> In terms of the more formal music, I always open the hymnbook and have a look at it – just little practical issues like whether it's written in the same key that it used to be written in. Lots of hymn music has been moved down. I'll often [as a tenor] sing an alto line if it doesn't go above an A, simply to try to keep stretching my range upward, which is necessary for the other singing that I do. (Syd)

Editors of hymnals make many changes; for example, text may be altered from the original to accommodate theological perspectives, modern vocabulary and gender inclusiveness. Musical changes are made, often to present a new tune with an old text or a tune may be transposed to a lower or higher key to make singing easier. In the example

above, the singer makes note of changes, especially ones that allow him to move into the vocal line traditionally assigned to women; for him, this is different musical perspective.

In the vast majority of churches, including Eldridge, the musical notation of choruses is not available to the singers; the lyrics are the only written elements and are most often projected on a screen. In the absence of musical notes, a musically literate singer complained:

> I don't like singing in a fumbling kind of way. The music [of the choruses] isn't hard and if there were notes, if there were sheet music or something or other, I could sing better and I wish that I could. (Syd)

The original versions of the choruses are found on CD's, DVD's or perhaps in published books. In the case at Eldridge, the Worship Team leader refers to digital, not written material, selects and learns appropriate choruses and subsequently supplies the band with lyrics and chord changes and teaches them the melody orally. Members of the congregation may or may not know the chorus prior to its introduction in a service and so their authoritative vocal version of the melody is that which is presented by the amplified singers of the Worship Team. In my experience, it is extremely rare that the melody of a song is reproduced in the instrumental accompaniment supplied by any Worship Team anywhere. In the case of Eldridge's unique instrumentation, the violin and mandolin-banjo have the technical and idiomatic capacity, but rarely do so. Therefore, it is almost always the case that the congregation learns the melody of the chorus aurally from the oral version offered by the singers in the band.

To a large degree, the observation made by Small (1998) concerning non-literate ensembles is true for a congregation that sings with visual reference to only the lyrics.

> When there is no written [musical] score to refer to, it is probable that the piece will go on changing and developing through successive performances, without anyone caring too much or perhaps even noticing, since there is no stable "authentic" version with which to compare it. (p. 114)

In the absence of a written, "authentic" version of the music, the potential for individual expression is apparent – improvisation on the part of the accompanists and the congregational singers. For example, I have observed that the same chorus sung by many congregations will often have slight variations as each church develops its own version. Especially variable are stylistic nuances which may be more or less observed by any given congregation. These are most easily heard in the attempts to sing syncopated rhythms typical in popular song. Discrepancies in the congregation were especially noticeable at Eldridge; the younger singers and the vocalists in the band easily reproduced syncopation with stylistic authenticity while the older members tended to "square" the beat. Also in this environment, if anyone wants to harmonize, it has to be improvised by each singer and the success of their attempts will vary from song to song, contingent on the melodic and harmonic structures of the piece and the ability singers.

Small (1998) refers to "stable authentic" versions and his use of the term "authentic" needs some explanation. A written score, together with its time and place of production, provides a stable authentic version of the music that often becomes the standard against which performances can be judged for their authenticity. It is evident that this sense of musical authenticity can impinge upon the expression of personal authenticity, especially originality and individuality in musical performance.

Small (1998) sees this dichotomy in terms of power: the written version of music, the score, and by implication the composer's intentions and historic context become the final arbiter of performance practice. Small (1998) demonstrates the juxtaposition in stark terms when he compares a completely improvised composition-performance (composed and performed simultaneously) with performance from some kind of reference material, as is most fully realized in the music-making typical of a modern day classical ensemble:

> The moment the musicians feel the need to write down instruction for performance in order to preserve it and hold it steady, a change begins to take place in the nature of the musicking and the relationships between those taking part. A crack appears in the hitherto unified musical universe, the single process [improvised composition and performance] begins to split apart, separating composer from performers, composition from performance and performers from listeners, centralizing power in the hands of the composer, the person who tells the performers what they are to do, and of the director, the person who tells them how they are to do it. (p. 115)

In a limited way, this contrast can be seen in the way the Eldridge congregation often performs hymns and choruses. When using traditional material, the hymnal is read note-for-note by the organist and becomes the heard accompaniment for the congregation who have the option of reproducing the same note-for-note version from the same hymnal, either by memory or by reading. Whatever the means of recall, the book or more accurately, the composer, arranger and text writer become the audible and visual authority to whom all surrender in the performance. A modicum of creativity by the organist may be evident in the use of different organ timbres, affording some variety

between verses and refrains. If alternative harmony is used, in the case of Eldridge it is printed in the hymnal and therefore able to be followed by the congregation, assuming they too are reading from the book.

In contrast, the accompanying musicians and congregational singers are able to bring originality and individuality to the choruses because their musical beginning point is an unwritten melody and broad harmonic structures, not spelled out note by note. (See Musical leaders etc., p. 212) Each Worship Team rendition of a chorus is potentially a unique accompaniment to which the people now add their own vocal version; the song is a "home-style" creation. If being authentic is characterized by nearness to origins on one hand and originality of expression on the other, then choruses have more potential than hymns for becoming authentic song. In the musical realization of choruses, power shifts from the printed page to the performing people.

Often, especially in peer youth events, I have distinctly heard the leaders and congregation singing GAD (God), AH (I), and MAH (my) – a clear use of the southern US accent that is acceptable in the pop music style. This pronunciation is stylistically authentic, but as it is not the usual pronunciations used in everyday speech typical of northern locations, is it the authentic voice of the singer?

Trudgell (1983) contends that the most obvious reason pop singers (in his study, British musicians) employ a different accent when singing than when speaking is that

> [m]ost genres of twentieth-century popular music, in the western world and in some cases beyond are (Afro-) American in origin. Americans have dominated the field, and cultural domination leads to imitation: it is appropriate to sound like an American when performing in what is predominantly an American activity;

> and one attempts to model one's singing on that of those who do it best and who one admires most. (p. 144)

The imitation of pop performers deemed to be authentic seems to be a reasonable explanation for the accent used by young worshippers; contemporary worship songs are in popular styles associated with Americans. However, according to Cone's (1974) analysis, these singers seem to have adopted a dramatic persona other than just being themselves; the worshippers sing as if they were pop singers. This adaptation is stylistically acceptable and is authentic performance practice, but is this an example of authentic worship? If the words of the songs are valued and accepted as my words but are sung differently than they would be if spoken, is this performance a true self expressing itself to God?

When I have drawn to the attention of groups of college students, examples of their singing with an accent and the possibility of inauthenticity, they have invariably responded that they were totally unaware of their sung pronunciations and were unable to account for them. This adaptation appears to be an example of how enculturation confuses our notions of authenticity by demanding the temporary and contextual use of another dialect, albeit unconsciously, in what purports to be an intimate and deeply personal act of really worshipping in song.

Me, us, and "horizons of significance."

As demonstrated in the analysis of song texts (Tables 1 and 2), almost half of the songs sung by the Eldridge congregation are personal expressions by virtue of their use of "I" and "me" in the text, while just under a third use "us" and "we." This emphasis on the

personal as opposed to the collective is typical of evangelicalism, where, for example, importance is given to an encounter with Jesus as your "personal" Savior and the celebration of that experience in both song and narrative testimony (Wells, 1993).

However, the difficulty of balancing personal and collective expression goes deeper than that found in texts of songs. Singing in a multi-generational context seems to cause a considerable amount of tension among some younger worshippers compared to a peer event.

> There's a whole level of intimidation when you're worshipping with people of all different ages than when you're with just your peers. In a youth group, I feel more comfortable because I'm around my peers and we're all kind of at the same place; I don't feel like other people are so far above me. So with my peers I think I'm more comfortable completely worshipping God. And I've noticed in things like youth group, people will be more comfortable; they'll start crying and they'll be lifting their hands and people will feel comfortable kneeling, falling on their faces if they need to. But on a Sunday morning you won't see that because there's a difference when your parents can see you and when other adults in the church can see you. It's just different. (Shelly)

> At church, there are a lot of older people – that's the majority – but there are also quite a few younger people, middle aged and younger people. Often I don't feel free to express myself because there aren't that many people that are the same as me and have the same tastes. So if I start jumping or something, or waving my hands in the air, I might get embarrassed when people start looking at me. But

> when I'm at camp or something, most people are young people, everyone is the same age or within one year, and I feel a lot freer because many people are expressing themselves in the same way. (Steve)

> I think that when you go to a college-age event, it's a little bit safer because you know where the people around you are coming from. If it's all, say, people my age, young adults, you are probably going to be more lenient towards whatever style of worship you want to have or singing different kinds of songs. But when you go into a church, you don't know; some people might be upset about the songs you are singing or the way you are singing. I think I'm a little more cautious at church. I recognize that what I sing is chosen for me, but I've been around people who've made a lot of judgments about other people because of the way they sing the songs or the way they raise their hands or not. There's one gentleman in my church back home who won't sing a song that was written after 1960. (Ruth)

These young people seem to be in the quandary of a deep desire to express the real "me" and the pressure of conformity exerted by a restrictive "us" in worship. This tension is well founded. According to Taylor (1991), the articulation of self, originality and difference requires modes of expression such as the "languages of art, of love, of gestures," that are learned in dialogue with others that matter to us (p. 33). But even as we recognise the importance of the communal influence, there is still the monological ideal at work. It says that

> we should strive to define ourselves on our own to the fullest degree possible, coming as best we can to understand and thus gain some control over the influence of our parents, and avoiding falling into any further such dependencies. We will still need relationships to fulfil but not to define ourselves. (Taylor, 1991, p. 34)

But the danger is that this stance

> forgets how our understanding of the good things in life can be transformed by our enjoying them in common with people we love, how some goods become accessible to us only through such common enjoyment. (Taylor, 1991, p. 34)

And so, in our quest for authenticity, there is the necessity of defining ourselves in opposition to others but at the same time in dialogue with them. Many of the younger people want the personal freedom to express themselves in an individual way without any real or imagined judgment from others present, especially parents or other elders.

> [A]lthough humans have various intentional powers for world [and] self comprehension, these powers are thoroughly socially orchestrated and regulated: certain modes of intentional contact are legitimated and sanctified, while others are forcefully denied and shunned. Background practices, those imposed mainly through social negativity, orchestrate and regulate the kinds of comportments and involvements that are deemed appropriate and/or acceptable. (Anton, 2001, p. 60)

From the perspective of the young, it seems that freedom for self-expression in worship can only happen when a sense of security is derived from the confidence that all present are of the same desire and at the same general spiritual place as they are in their own lives. Thus, we have one major reason for youth worship events and the presumed

necessity to divide churches over worship style. This division is not merely about music and personal taste. One of the deeper values at work is the desire for freedom to interact with the music and to safely express one's personal feelings about God in that moment. For this to occur, there must also be a felt understanding that a certain set of behaviours are socially acceptable: lifting hands, closing eyes, standing, sitting, kneeling, jumping, lying, dancing, clapping and so on.

> Whatever else, embarrassment has to do with the figure the individual cuts before others felt to be there at the time. The crucial concern is the impression one makes on others in the present – whatever the long-range or unconscious basis of their concern may be. This fluctuating configuration of those present is a most important reference group. (Goffman, 1967, p. 98)

Ideally, these behaviours are understood by all as possible but not mandatory actions and include the freedom not to sing or participate in any visible way. But in the multigenerational setting, it is natural that the young feel somewhat under the scrutiny of their elders.

The behaviours in question are viewed and appreciated by many young worshippers as personal expressions of worship, not corporate. This "do your own thing" is an individual, private, yet public response to God – the interior freely brought to the exterior – and as such is valued as personally authentic. Part of this individualized aspect is that these expressions are seen as spontaneous, not mandated or regimented, but an immediate response from the worshipper. This being said, we need to address the place of this expressive individualism (Bellah, 1996) in corporate worship and congregational singing. Is a service where expressive, individual actions are practised deemed corporate

only because all agree that one can do whatever one wants? Is this a group of individuals privately worshipping to the same music, in the same room? We have seen that really worshipping with all of its dimensions is best achieved in and because of the large group meeting; the affect of everyone singing, the leadership of a band in a room are all necessary and contribute to the achievement of personally expressive worship.

> [O]ne of the common axes of criticism of the contemporary culture of authenticity is that it encourages a purely personal understanding of self-fulfillment, thus making the various associations and communities in which the person enters purely instrumental in their significance. (Taylor, 1991, p. 43)

Can this apparently instrumentalized gathering be a "community" of believers? If so, what kind of community is being celebrated, encouraged and taught if the worship activity and actual goal of the singing is a privatized experience, achieved by common consent. Even if all the singers are comfortable with each other, for real worship to occur, the activity of the other needs to be "tuned out" as it is often deemed to be a distraction. Clapp (2002) addresses this dilemma of our times.

> Modernity confined ritual to sacred "symbolic activity" set decisively apart from the practical conduct of everyday, and what we now call "secular" life. In this setting, liturgy falls under heavy pressure to be instrumentalized to cater to the privatized spiritualities of church-goers. A premium is put on altering or reinventing church rituals so that they will serve individual emotional fulfillment. Christians can no longer tend to see themselves constituted as Christians by their induction into the church, but instead, see themselves initially and fundamentally as (somehow) Christians apart from the church. The church can then be nothing

> but an interest or affinity group: rather than it constituting Christians, individual Christians now assemble to constitute the church, to reinforce and *express* their faith in a crowd. Indeed, the liturgy is made not so much a culture-constituting and formative practice as an expressive ceremony. (p. 121)

Clapp continues and quotes Bell (1997) whom I quote here more completely:

> Most examples of ritual invention, as well as rituals variously reinterpreted in the contemporary context, suggest that a new paradigm of ritual has gradually replaced a set of more long-standing assumptions. In the newer model, ritual is primarily a medium of expression; a special type of language suited to what is there to express, namely, internal spiritual-emotional resources tied to our true identities but frequently unknown and undeveloped. Ritual expression of these internal dimensions will unleash their healing power for the self and others. This is not ritual as time-honored or heavenly ordained worship by which the transcendent collapses the gulf between the human and the divine, on the one hand and the human world dispenses its responsibilities to the heavenly one, on the other. The new paradigm is directed more inward than outward, apt to define community and society in terms of the self rather than the self in terms of the community. Metaphors of wholeness and attainment replace older ones of transcendence and deliverance. (p. 241)

This tension between corporate worship as a site for cultural shaping as opposed to a setting for personal expression is clearly faced when worshippers are in a blended, multi-generational Sunday worship setting such as Eldridge. As reported, the realities of differences in behavioural expectations, musical preferences and the presence of those

deemed to be in a different place in their spiritual journey causes the young "contemporaries" to modify their actions and attitudes. In doing so, they feel that they are being less personally authentic in their worship. But are their modifications another form of authentic self-expression, acknowledging being-with-others as inherent to the nature of self-hood (Anton, 2001)? One can and does choose the others with whom one worships and thereby we are understandingly-being-with-others-towards-God in a mode that is true for the self as one who has chosen others. The very act of choosing a group with whom to worship denies one context of being-with-others over another and it is possible that one choice is more self-less than the other.

However, according to the younger interviewees, choosing to be with others that are "the same as me" frees them to be more personally expressive. In addition, real worship includes the expressed desire to be intentionally unaware of these chosen others, even in a comfortable, homogeneous grouping that sings only contemporary songs (see Chapter 4, "Really worshipping"). In this case, the crowd of singers and the leaders are a necessary ingredient for personal participation but they need to be backgrounded for personal worship to occur – to be aware of only God and self. In this desire for isolation, the social context, the affiliation with fellow worshippers has become instrumental to personal aspirations and at the same time essential to authentic worship or really worshipping.

When given various opportunities to worship, some have difficulty recognizing or articulating significant criteria for choosing and one direction taken is "an affirmation of choice itself…it is choice that confers worth" (Taylor, 1991, p. 37). A college student expressed this well:

> Church on Sunday morning is more of a ritual, I think, more that I'm expected to go by my family…But something like musical worship at youth group, I don't feel expected to go and I feel more free to go or to not go. I guess because church can get repetitive – I've been going for my whole life – I feel like sometimes I don't truly focus on the musical worship. It's not necessarily a choice that I make to go to church: it's a habit. But with something like youth worship on Friday nights, I think "Hey, wow! I really feel like adoring God. Good thing there's something on Friday night that I can go to" and now I choose to go. (Chelsea)

The danger in elevating choice as an important motivation is that it does not admit to any criteria other than choice itself against which the assumed equally worthy options can be distinguished. Taylor puts the problem this way:

> Authenticity can't be defended in ways that collapse horizons of significance. Even the sense that the significance of my life comes from its being chosen…depends on the understanding that *independent of my will* there is something noble, courageous, and hence significant in giving shape to my own life… It may be important that my life be chosen…but unless some options are more significant than others, the very idea of self-choice falls into triviality and hence incoherence. Self-choice as an ideal makes sense only because some *issues* are more significant than others. Which issues are significant, *I* do not determine. If I did, no issue would be significant but then the very ideal of self-choosing *as a moral ideal* would be impossible. (1991, pp. 38, 39)

So the ideal of self-choice supposes that there are *other* issues of significance beyond self-choice. The ideal can't stand alone, because it requires a

> horizon of issues of importance, which help define the *respects* in which self-making is significant. (1991, pp. 39, 40)

Taylor calls for an ideal of authenticity that includes a background of things that matter beyond the self – a "horizon of significance."

> Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God or something else of this order matters crucially, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands. (1991, pp. 40, 41)

The emphasis that the younger worshippers place on feelings as a motivation is evidence of an attempt to grant significance to self-choice and the worth of the activity chosen. In stark terms, real, personally authentic worship is held by many young people to occur when feelings – "I really feel like adoring God" – are the motivation for choosing to situate oneself in an environment that will produce worshipful feelings and allow the freedom to express them. But by Taylor's assessment (1991), this is an aberrant authenticity because it is trivial and incoherent. He warns that deviant forms of the quest for authenticity may occur if the "horizon of significance" is not taken into account.

> The self-centered forms are deviant…in two respects. They tend to centre fulfillment on the individual, making his or her affiliations purely instrumental; they push, in other words, to a social *atomism.* And they tend to see fulfillment as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimating the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature, or God; they foster, in other words, a radical anthropocentrism. (p. 58)

This individualistic form of authenticity is more likely held by young people, when duty to God or habitual worship practice is devalued in favour of "feeling like" worshipping and when authentic worship is contingent on positive feelings that echo those articulated by song.

However, do feelings validate choices in real life? When I willingly choose to tell my wife that I love her, am I required to feel love at that moment for my words to be authentic? There are countless occasions in life when we are compelled by circumstances to act when we "don't feel like it." In my teaching activity, I have often illustrated this reality by recalling my story of frequent 2:00 am diaper changes. I never felt like getting out of bed or addressing the needs of my child at that time of night. I did not feel any love towards the infant as I dealt with the situation. I acted despite my feelings because it was the right thing to do, based on my overarching commitment to love and care for my child.

Authentic or authenticating feelings had to be ignored for the right action to take place. Some options must be recognised as better than others by virtue of being rooted in something outside of the self on a "horizon of significance." According to Taylor, this kind of duty to others is not negative and inauthentic as it comprises the "horizon of significance" larger than my self-interest and must be taken into account. Bibby (2006) articulates this tension between gratifying our own desires and the good of others as his research found it in Canadian culture.

> Like it or not, the mentality of "What's in it for me?" or, at best, "What's in it for us?" – as in our immediate circle of family and friends – rules....The trend, of course, is not without potential downsides that are fairly self-evident. Societal life that requires a balance between the individual and the group, along with a balance

> between deference and discernment, also requires a balance between personal gratification and what is good for others.... We know well that our valued relationships with family and friends require us to find a balance between what we want and enjoy and what is important to them. Likewise, life in the workplace and marketplace requires not only take but give. Collective life at the organizational and community and civic levels receives very little if our primary motive is self-gratification. (pp. 73, 74)

In the light of these conflicting values, Peter, a father of young teens, reveals why he chooses to worship at Eldridge, with its mix of generations and musical styles and tells of the evolution in his thinking.

> When I first came to the church about twenty years ago, it wasn't what I was used to because I had attended a few camps and there we sang only choruses and to me that was exciting; that was joy for me. So in the hymn singing at Eldridge, it was stability for me, not joy. It was joy for other people, clearly, but I was expecting church to be like camp: it would be fun music for me. My criticisms then were: organ music, too slow, all hymns and what I would call very mature music as opposed to youthful music. It just wasn't part of my upbringing or my experience at all. I was expecting something more upbeat, lively, raise your hands; something more spontaneous than regimented. So I tolerated it and was not happy with it. But I felt there was stability in the church and good people and so that's what held me there more than my lack of enjoyment of the music.
>
> Now I appreciate the hymns because I know they are helping other people worship. And the fact that there are choruses as well gives me some anticipation. I

would hate to say we're never going to have hymns again because I know how important they are to some people. I would rather be worshipping beside elderly people and sharing that worship experience with them than be selfish and say "It has to be all choruses." That would be wrong. I like the balance, I really do. Sometimes there's a hymn I do enjoy but I also appreciate that when the choruses are being played the older people don't sit there quietly. I sort of watch and see that they are singing them too and I appreciate that. So I think it's more important to share together in worship than to get my way.

For the last five or eight years, since we've had the variety of hymns and choruses, it's been the happiest time in worship for me, in the church. It wasn't me that said something about the older people needing that and the younger people needing that. But when I heard that, it resonated with me and made me think it made sense. I can't dictate, nor would I want to attend a church that sings nothing but choruses, because I sure appreciate the wisdom and maturity of the more senior Christians and just appreciate being around them. And if this is music that means a lot to them and if they can tolerate the music that means a lot to me, then we have a good basis for a relationship.

Norman, a single young adult, reports similar sentiments:

I'm generally not the biggest fan of old hymns, but at the same time I recognize that Eldridge has a very wide population in terms of age and people's styles. And I don't think I would ever find myself complaining that I didn't like those hymns this morning, because that's being self-centered. That's saying that the only songs that can be in church are the ones that I like. I don't think that's right at all. I

> generally like the music that goes on there. I'll admit that I'm not the biggest fan of the old hymns, but there are a lot of people that are. It's very meaningful for them; it's their worship experience and I don't want to belittle that at all by saying to Mary, "Let's just do new choruses."

Even some of the teenaged boys have adopted a tolerant attitude towards the mixture of styles. Steve said, "I think we have the different kinds of songs because we need to appeal to different age groups. If you only appeal to one, the other might get turned off, and you don't really want that." Another was more insightful:

> Also, the lyrics: sometimes only certain lyrics are in one kind of music and the songs usually try to show what is going to be in the sermon, but sometimes it's not. And so we're not always trying to direct to age group, we're not trying to show the music. We're trying to let you listen to the words. (Bill)

The potential for conflict over style and preference, self and communal interest, seems to be resolved by many at Eldridge in the recognition that "we" as a multi-generational congregation, are more important than "me" as an individual. In the development of the blended musical environment, there has been an emphasis on serving the other rather than just pleasing self. Mary (the paid staff member responsible for musical worship) has set the standard:

> [W]e have something that is scriptural and is singable and, after that, the individual members of the congregation decide, the motive being, I get to listen to worship to whatever kind of music I want all the other hours of the week. For this one, I will sing whatever blesses my brother. [This attitude has been

communicated through] years of doing it and subtle comments from the pulpit but just doing it…we try to sing it all.

Worship, words, hymns and choruses

In this study, the 11:00am Sunday service is the regular opportunity for individuals who identify with Eldridge Baptist Church to gather for worship, which includes singing together two distinct kind of song styles. Mary, the appointed leader of the services at Eldridge, expressed the priorities for their congregational singing in this way:

> Our singing in our service – congregational singing – does a couple of things. I believe that this part of God's creation [i.e. human kind] is vulnerable to music in a way that is a blessing to us. It is part of being created in the image of God I think – to be vulnerable to music. So we affirm this relationship between us and God as we sing. It's very powerful to ascribe honour and glory to God in a way that he has given us, unique to us. He invites us into His presence and we allow ourselves to be brought into the presence of God through singing.

In the expectation of singing in a gathering for worship, what does it mean to be vulnerable to music and its power? Does this include the possibility of textual power? The shifting tension between musical elements and textual content seems to be a difficult negotiation for the congregational singer, as described in the various "just singing" accounts (Chapter 4), and here is the stated expectation that participants be vulnerable to music which ascribes glory to God, presumably articulated most clearly and precisely in song lyrics. Through singing, the experience of this uniquely human blessing is not

spoken of as merely an apprehension of beauty or other more neutral aesthetic qualities but is framed in an affirmation of a "relationship between us and God" and as an ushering into a place where the Divine is recognized as being present through the act of singing.

The other leader of congregational singing, Brian (Worship Team), defines his role as a worshipper and leader of the choruses in this way:

> On a Sunday morning, I have opportunity through some symbols – symbols being the location, being the songs that I hear, being the elements of a worship service that I can expect – I have opportunity through those symbols to just not worry about the details of my Monday through Saturday and Sunday afternoon existence and I can enjoy the sense of security in the faith that I maintain…I think that there's something legitimate there and I'm pleased to participate as a leader in making some of those symbols possible, being these choruses that at least some people find meaningful or significant. Or that they stand for something and that they can, for that ten minutes of the worship service, the chorus time, engage in something that they think has spiritual value. Could it happen outside of a Sunday? Sure, yeah, I guess it could. But there is that semiotic value of Sunday-ness.

As the purpose of the occasion for singing together on a Sunday is stated by the planners and leaders to be worship and something of spiritual value, it is interesting to note how congregants define and describe worship. I have divided these interview excerpts into categories indicating their general thrust and commented on them as they relate to singing. The first can be summarized thus: *worship as living a life that honours God.*

> Worship, in the broad sense is – I like the term somebody used in a workshop years ago – "worth-ship." We're giving to God what we are in a total sense. Worship at 11 to 12 on a Sunday morning or in a service in a church is corporate worship, where together we can raise up to God our thanksgiving, our appreciation of who he is and what he's been doing for us. So it's a little different from my broader interpretation of worship. But it is a time together when we can vocalize through the hymns and the songs and the choruses and scripture reading…responsive reading, in that way. But also focus on learning something more; to add to our ability to continue to worship once we've left the sanctuary at noon on Sunday and carry through in the following week. (George)

The pastor, Michael says,

> I guess that I do not define it as what happens from 11 to 12 o'clock on a Sunday morning. I am trying to teach the people at this church that worship is not an activity; it is a life and it is a life that is saturated with God; that we live in conscious awareness of God's presence when we're at the bank, when we're at work and at school and at the shopping mall – wherever we are; that we conduct ourselves fitting to the presence of God. (Michael)

> Worship is the glorifying of God in any way, shape or form. It can happen in the context of the church, it can happen in the context of a job, it can happen on the street, it can happen anywhere. It's the relationship of one's own heart to one's spirit, which is of course related directly to God. So if one has an understanding of the set of relationships that are already inherent in the spiritual being, and if

> your spirit is awakened as a Christian, for example, you'll be aware of that. Music, to me, in many ways, is one of the facilitators or one of the languages that that particular union can speak. (Todd)

This all-encompassing concept of worship is not time or place specific, going beyond a Sunday gathering; it is an approach to life as a whole. However, factors in the way churches conceive and speak of their activities tend to work against this broad conception: the 11 to 12 o'clock Sunday event is called a worship service, the musicians are very often called worship leaders or worship teams and the singing is often construed and spoken of as worship. Worship as an event – a performance with its intentions and assertions – is juxtaposed with worship as a lived life. For the two "worships" to work together it must be assumed that the desired worshipful sentiments expressed and felt while singing (performing) in a Sunday service will in some way be carried forward. They should transform the worshippers, or at least reinforce the personal and collective determination to continue worshipping outside the context of the service. The hope seems to be that all activities of the worship event will be significant in enabling believers to honour God in their everyday activities. William James (1902) says of this holistic view: "The collective name for the ripe fruits of religion in a character is Saintliness. The saintly character is the character for which spiritual emotions are the habitual centre of the personal energy" (p. 234).

Others view *worship as an offering*. Here are their words:

> Were you in the service when the pastor defined worship as "the unqualified enjoyment of God?" I fundamentally disagree. I do not think that is the case. I think worship is something that is from us, moving out from us. When we talk

> about the unqualified enjoyment of God I think that is something we experience rather than what we offer to God…I think that the worship of God comes about within the context of our recognition of the nature of God and I think primarily within the context of the recognition of the sacrifice that He made on the cross. (Syd)

> Well, I think you have to come prepared to the worship service, but this is not primarily about me. This is the worthiness of God. And that's where the word *worship* comes from: his worthiness to receive honour, glory and praise. (Al)

Giving rather than receiving is at the core of this definition of worship. It assumes that the worshipper has the theological awareness necessary to recognise God's worthiness which then generates an attitude of praise and thankfulness.

> God's attributes as [abstract objects], his holiness, his justice, his mercy, his absoluteness, his infinity, his omniscience, his tri-unity, the various mysteries of the redemptive process, the operation of the sacraments etc., have proved fertile wells of inspiring meditation for Christian believers. (James, 1902, p. 64)

The worshippers' response to these traits can take many concrete and ritual forms, including singing of his worth and can encompass not just religious action, but living life in such as way that it is a worthy offering of praise to such a God. We could say that this definition is an appended version of worship as a way of life. The comments of a member of a prominent Christian band, concerning one of their albums, exemplifies this: "We needed to write a song that is talking about giving to God and offering to God not just music but our entire lives" (Price, 2003, np).

The third view sees *worship as a specific mode of being.*

Now I think we're commanded to sing and make a joyful noise and sing praises to God, and that's for a good reason: because most often it uplifts us. But I certainly don't think that the whole worship experience in order to be genuine has to be joyful and uplifting. There can be in the very core of your pain, a realization that God is, God loves us, God is sustaining us, God has particular truth from the preacher to give to us, and that He's going to go with us from this service and that I'm there in large measure because I'm commanded to be there, and I hope to feel better as a result. But it's surely not a prerequisite of my being there and being there in a mode of genuine worship.

I think that a big part of worship is just acknowledging the worth-ship of God, acknowledging the way things are. And when we do that, with an attitude of reverential awe, whether privately or corporately, we are in a mode of worship as I see it. So I can be in that mode whether quietly meditating on a psalm which maybe convicts me, may cause lament or may cause great joy. I can do that with singing. I can do that with a hymn, a gospel song or a chorus, and I can sense that God is speaking to me, not in the sense that he's standing or sitting on my shoulder and whispering in my ear, but in the sense that this truth is being sung and it's uplifting in its' affective dimension, but not only that, but it corresponds to the way things really are. And I think God wants us to acknowledge the way things really are and when we do that, we are in mode of worship…And when we're singing a hymn, if that hymn line, let's say, causes my feelings to be stirred and my mind to say "yes, that's the way things actually are" and point me God-

> ward, I think that's honouring to him and I think that's worshipping him. (Edward)

In this view, worship is a frame of mind that is different from that with which we engage everyday life. It is a specific, time-bound attentiveness given to God with the acknowledgement that reality – the stuff of life – must include God. It is in some ways performative, having a definable purpose or telos to any action as given. James (1902) argues that this is a view rooted in a philosophical bent.

> Even in soliloquizing with ourselves, we construe our feelings intellectually. Both our personal ideals and our religious and mystical experiences must be interpreted congruously with the kind of scenery which our thinking mind inhabits. (pp. 359, 360)

Others see *worship as meditation on God.*

> In my case, completely worshipping God would mean focusing completely on Him; there's nothing else on my mind; like no other side notes about my friends or what's going on or who's fighting with who or whatever. Just completely focused on God and just giving him all your attention and acknowledging that he is God and acknowledging that he is the creator and the maker of everything and that he actually cares about us. I think completely acknowledging that and thinking about that and meditating on him. (Shelley)

> Surrendering to God, and focusing on God. And being honest with God; yeh, really focusing on him. Spending time where it's not my cares and concerns from

> the world but it's just one-on-one time with him in a large setting. That's worshipful. (Peter)

This view appears to be a more deliberate and narrow version of worship as a mode of being. It is attention given exclusively to God, perhaps in private or "one-on-one time with him in a large setting." Singing can be a part of this, but is not mentioned as being necessary.

Another outlook is that *worship is primarily an experience.*

> It's an identification; it's a relating to what is being sung… I guess music is the ultimate worship experience in that you can really relate to what is being spoken, and that can take you into a worship experience, but music seems to have within it the elements that transport…even beautiful orchestral music or beautiful piano music can have a similar effect… It's very peaceful, comforting, and joyful. (Freda)

> It's a two way street. It's…it's when I come and recognize what God has done for me but the flip side I am open to what he wants to give me again. And in part of that, I give back to him. That's what I mean by a two way street. Sometimes it's pouring out my heart to him….Sometimes it's just sitting and listening…. Sometimes, it's just praising him, and that's worship. (Kate)

> Hmm. I guess worship is just…for me an important part of it is communicating with God. (Long silence) Hmm. It's so hard to find the words. I guess music kind of helps to put you in the right frame of mind for saying thank you to God. I think

> that God really likes music, too. I think he really enjoys it when we sing to Him. I think it has a feedback to it. When you're singing worship and you're hearing the beauty of it, than it makes you even more thankful and joyful. (Laura)

Worship as an experience is produced in the moment; it is time bound and dependent on subjective response. Webber (2004) observes: "In this scenario worship is verified as authentic when the worshipper is made to feel good or has a conviction or the comforting presence of God" (p. 91). As I have shown, music and song offer much potential for experiential worship.

For others, *worship is inseparable from singing* and often referred to as "really worshipping." As elaborated in Chapter 4, really worshipping appears to be a mode of being that develops after having sung simple repetitive songs for a period of time while permitting the song to evoke and provoke feelings. These feelingful responses give shape and meaning to an in-the-moment sense of self and one's relationship to God, the preferred and assumed subject and object of the song. It is another kind of awareness of self in the midst of singing. The repetition of the song helps bring the singer to an intense focus where attention is shifted from exterior to interior to God, from the communal gathering to self in song as worship. The words of the song are appropriated as one's own as they are allowed to act as catalysts to sentiments felt by the singer. This transforms the song into more than music and word; it is now a personal, felt message given to God in a public place with others, while being aware only of self in communion with God.

How, then, does the act of singing in a stylistically blended service intersect with these various views and experiences of worship? It appears that in all the worship categories, singing can be included: it is part of life, it can accommodate the mode of

being that is worship, it can be an offering, it can enable a concentration on God alone, and it can be part of or engender an experience with God. But really worshipping as described (see Chapter 4) is absolutely dependent on singing; not merely singing but singing a certain type of song – a chorus – in specific ways. And this kind of singing must be a personally authentic performance for an audience of One. Really worshipping is so dependent on choruses that in a stylistically blended environment, hymns pose some challenges in the attempt to really worship.

> I'm usually excited for and looking forward to the worship team time [choruses]. I look in the bulletin and "oh, good, it's time for the worship team." And then with the hymns, it's more about mentally preparing myself for this, so that I can get into a place of worshipping. It takes more effort for me, like blocking out criticism from my mind, like deciding to look at it very positively and trying to focus on the words and trying to kind of maybe block out the rest of the congregation until I can get into a song. This is difficult if I'm feeling a little tired or if I'm just having trouble concentrating that morning. If things are on my mind, it can be harder to kind of get into a frame of mind for it.
>
> I think for me, when it comes to the words of a song, even with music that I just listen to recreationally, the words are always very important to me. And when it comes to singing worship songs [choruses], just singing them through once, I don't always have a chance to really meditate on the words. I find I can sing with much more feeling if I have a chance to kind of meditate on the words and really think about what they mean to me while I'm singing them. And so I find if we just go through a worship song once, it doesn't give me enough time to

do that. If I'm singing [hymns] out of the hymnal, concentrating too hard on reading the notes and getting the words right, then I find I don't have enough chance to do that either. Twice is good. Three times is better. Any more than that starts to get annoying. I just find that once I've kind of got it, and felt it and I've got it out, and then…that's all I'm going to get out of it that day.

With the hymns, I guess the most important thing to me is to sing for longer. Even the ones I don't like, if we were to sing them for longer, it would be easier for me to really get deeper into them. For some of them, the ones that only have three verses, they would be good to repeat. But the ones that have six verses – that would be a little much to repeat. But maybe even just to sing two or three in a row; that's good. That helps because if we just sing one here and do some other stuff, and then sing one there and do some other stuff, I find I feel very shallow in the hymns. To just sing for longer, I would really like that. I would like to repeat the choruses more and kind of really get into the meaning of the words instead of just singing each line once and going on to the next song.

And with the hymns, I find I have a love-hate relationship with hymns. Some hymns I feel like I can connect with a lot and they're so filled with awe. With worship songs, it's much more intimate, talking with God it seems like, and then with hymn, it's much more exploring just the bigness of God and the things that he's done. But I find a lot of hymns in the books…I cannot…I don't understand the language enough to be able to be understanding what the words mean while I'm singing them out of the book. And so with a lot of hymns I just feel kind of cold about them because I don't feel that connection with the words

and how I feel because I don't use those words ever in my normal daily life. So that is a little frustrating to me sometimes.

It wasn't really until I moved away from home that I even contemplated lyrics that much. When I started going to…well, I guess in high school a little bit, at youth events and things…getting into worship songs where the words were my words, words I understood. It's funny, because I have a pretty large vocabulary, a pretty good grasp on languages, even from different periods. Sitting and reading a book, from context I can get meanings of things quite easily. But I think it's just the "on the fly" while you're singing because you have to think so quickly. My brain just doesn't connect with the meanings of words written in that older style.

Some of the music I really enjoy. I really enjoy the oldest stuff – stuff written by classical composers and things like that. The ones that I really dislike are, say, like the Salvation Army era music [19c]. Ones that sound like they were an old bar tune that they took and changed the words or it sounds like it should be played by the organ at a baseball game.

Sometimes to take the words of an old hymn and update the music a little bit helps me connect a bit better to it. And if it's got rhythm to it, a bass line or a drum beat, then I feel like moving a bit. The organ doesn't do it for me; it's kind of funny that way. And I do think moving with the music is part of the emotional experience of music and worship for me. And maybe it's also kind of a cultural reference point, because of my generation and my love for rock and roll and rhythm and blues and things like that and the familiarity I have with that. That makes me happy and so that's part of my joy when I'm worshipping. (Laura)

> With hymns it is much more about the words. There's a lot of powerful stuff packed in the hymn. I really enjoy singing them and un-compact them and really see what the words mean. And with choruses, it's much more of an emotional reaction. There's a lot of repetition and the first couple of times through…it takes a while to kind of switch from being aware of your surroundings to being aware of communion with God. So the first times I'm listening to people around me and listening to myself sing then after I've had the repetition I can tune that out and focus on actual worship. I think the repetition of the words play into my focus on worship. By the end I'm able to take the words and use those as my own, whereas at the beginning I kind of just singing something that is in front of me. It's different with a hymn; when you've constantly got new things that you're singing about, sometimes it's more difficult to kind of get past the listening to the words and music for itself, to get to the point when you're actually using them as communication. (Ruth)

These thoughts, experiences and suggestions are almost identical to those reported by Liesch (2001) in an informal survey of his college students (see his Chapter 1). The nature of the singers' interaction with sung words is primary to whether or not what is understood as communion with God – real worship – is experienced. These younger congregants are somewhat ambivalent in their experience of singing hymns; some appreciate and are willing to grapple with the texts while others find them too dense and foreign. It has been said (source unknown) that choruses and hymns are encountered in contrasting ways; choruses are "circular" while hymns are "linear." "Circular" seems to refer to the compact nature of most choruses – monothematic with short phrases and

simple vocabulary – that permits and even begs for repetition of some or all of the song. The singers really do go round again and in going around, they are able to come again to the emotional core of the song and reassert their personal resonance, their emotional identification. And in the repetition, perhaps they give to it a slightly different voice – a scoop here, a sigh there – as if underlining the important again, but in a different colour.

> In songs, words are the sign of the voice. A song is always a performance and song words are always spoken out – vehicles for the voice. The voice can also use nonverbal devices to make its points – accents, sighs, emphases, hesitations, changes of tones. Song words, in short, work as *speech*, as structures of sound that are *direct* signs of emotion and marks of character; songs are more like plays than poems. [Pop] [s]ongwriters, therefore, draw on our conversational knowledge of how voices work, which is why they use common phrases, snippets of slang.
>
> Pop songs celebrate not the articulate but the inarticulate and the evaluation of pop singers depends not on words but on sounds – on the noises around the words. In daily life, the most directly intense statements of feeling involve just such noises: people gasp, moan, laugh, cry, and so on. They measure the depth and the originality of their emotions by reference to their *inability* to find words for them – phrases like "I'm frightened" or "I love you" seem inadequate to the state of mind they are describing. This is why songs are sung in the first place, and in day-to-day terms, people distrust the silver-tongued, the seducers, politicians, salesmen, who've got the gift of the gab. Inarticulateness, not poetry, is the popular songwriter's conventional signs of sincerity. (Frith, 1981, p. 35)

I have frequently heard from older worshippers, including those at Eldridge, that although they accept and participate in singing choruses, one of the most irritating aspects is the repetition of them. One insightful older woman is quite stumped as to why the choruses are repeated. She asked, "Is God deaf?" And those who prefer traditional poetry complain that the songs don't scan or rhyme and or have predictable phrase lengths. Their expectations for sung words of worship have not been shaped by present day popular culture, but church culture as they have known it in their formative years. They grew up with hymns and gospel songs that have many stanzas which develop a theme, unravelling it and requiring the singer to follow a train of thought – a linear progression. Even though many gospel songs contain a refrain that is repeated after each verse, there is still a progression of thought to the piece. And lyrics in these genres are most often full of imagery, have internal metrical schemes and frequently use "thee" and "thou" as pronouns. As traditional poetic forms, hymns are literary entities that can and do stand alone without music and can be sung to any tune that matches their meter. But choruses, like popular songs, are linked to only one melody, the lyrics and tune most often being composed simultaneously and thus more organically expressive. The text and tunes of hymns and gospel songs are structurally less connected and much less reliant than popular songs on the "inarticulate" aspects of singing and musical nuance for their communicative power. In fact, the music used for hymns is constructed so that its expressive nature allows for portability and therefore able to be a vehicle for more than one text, thus acknowledging that the text is more important than the music that carries it.

According to personal accounts, the vast majority of young worshippers agree that choruses are more instantly accessible than hymns; they can easily sing the tunes and the

words are quickly understood and then used as my words. Choruses as a form lend themselves to repetition that allows for sustained focus and the development of a sense of communicating with God. They more easily resonate.

The term "resonate" is much used in common parlance to describe some sort of personal identification with another person, a circumstance, an idea or an event. I repeat here what I quoted earlier: the Latin root of resonate is resonatia which means "echo" (Hoad, 1996) – a repetition of sound by reflection (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996). Plessner (1970) calls it a feeling that is a complete involvement, a "commensurate oscillation" with aspects of life (1970, pp. 129, 130). In contemporary culture, this feeling called resonance is often an arbiter of a kind of truth.

But what is this truth? In the course of the dissertation, I have referred to many truths that may be encountered in worship songs and singing:

"Objective truth" is contained in words that are deemed true because they conform to an authoritative scriptural and theological stance; this is one criterion for use at Eldridge. For a worshipper to sing words acknowledged to be objectively true suggests that he or she must bring to the text the ability to recognize its truth, based either on personal theological knowledge or trust in those who have chosen it for use in the service. To sing the song as true in this regard does not require liking it or sensing any resonance with it other than agreeing that what the text says is objectively true.

"Performance truth" is an assertion of a song with the intention that it be understood as true by those who listen, which includes the singer, thus making it a performance rather than a rote quote. Performance truth is a difficult matter. As Hustad (1993) points out, when performing a song it is possible

> for an insincere singer to come across convincingly to an audience and for a devoted, pious believer to be heard as insincere, perhaps because of the latter's lack of an adequate singing-communicating technique. 'Communicating' can be learned – and that statement is not intended to be an excuse for the 'phony' gospel singer. (p. 524)

Hustad's notion of communicating appears to be similar to Mark's (1981) assertion which must include the intention that the piece of music be understood by the audience as being true. Both these ideas are closely related to the telos (Godlovitch, 2001) which distinguishes a practice session from a performance given to an audience. However, we need to bear in mind that song, with the presence of words, is different than wordless or "pure music" and in matters of truth, more complicated. In singing a song, concrete ideas are present by virtue of the text and it is possible that song may be sung without any personal commitment to the objective truth of the words but performed "as if" they were true, that is, performance truth. This stance can be accomplished by adopting a sort of dramatic persona, according to Cone's analysis (1974). How else can we explain masterful and convincing performances, for example, of Handel's *Messiah* by countless professionals and ordinary folk who make no claim to Christianity as their religious convictions?

Finally, I have discussed "personal truth" – a sense that the song resonates with me, that what it is saying (text) and how it is said (music) is true for me, for this moment in my life and that I can sing it as my words, my song. The possibility of insincere or inauthentic singing drives worshippers, especially the younger cohort, to desire the feeling of resonance and personal authenticity in worship. Passionate worship is the goal

as opposed to dutiful worship. However, for resonance to occur, self becomes the immovable against which, in this case, the song bounces and evokes this particular kind of feeling. As I have shown earlier, the objective, theological truth of the text and the relative worthiness of the music are not necessities for resonance, although they may be part of the equation. That the words and music resonate is the prime condition for personal truth – authenticity. And so in this case, the self becomes the arbiter of what is true. One could say that if a song resonates, it rings with personal truth and can therefore be offered and experienced as real worship. Because the audience is God (Kierkegaard, 1948), it is most important that the singer feels authentic, for an omniscient God cannot be fooled.

The view that worship is inseparable from singing a certain kind of song, one that I like and therefore resonates with me in a specific way, is predicted on self-referential judgement – autonomy. Although the song and singing are in the context of a gathering that assumes the worth of God, surely this qualifies as what Taylor calls a drive towards social atomism that

> tend[s] to see fulfillment as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimating the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature, or God; they foster, in other words, a radical anthropocentrism. (1991, p. 58)

An integral part of really worshipping is the perception that God is near and that the singer is in communication with him. However, these characteristics are not exclusive to one view of worship, but are experienced differently according to stylistic preference and how hymns and choruses are engaged. For those who prefer choruses and really

worshipping in the contemporary musical setting, the feelings of nearness are sought after and brought about by singing and song and one's continuous immersion in it. By contrast, those who reported no difficulty in their use of hymnody – many of the older generation – serendipitously enjoy a sense of awe, adoration, or peace and a fresh awareness of the reality of God that is described as simply coming upon them as they sing. And if this doesn't happen, there seems to be no less a sense of having worshipped (see Chapter 4). This stylistic and often generational divide has been noted at Eldridge by Mary, the paid worship leader.

> [S]ome individuals just worship because that's what they are there to do – they make the decision before they get up in the morning – that they're there to worship and they're going to worship. And those people tend to be a few seniors that I know. They are celebrating the fact that they are going to meet with God in the morning. And they don't know how they are going to meet with God; it's going to be wonderful to find out how it is they are going to meet with God, whether it's going to be this, or this, or this, they decided to worship. Other people are very vulnerable to being musically led. Those folk can worship easier if we sing music they like that week and they have a harder time worshipping if we don't sing music they like that week.

This is a significant difference: being surprised by a sense God's presence compared to wanting to generate the experience by a specific kind of participation or having it generated for you by immersion in a specific kind of musical environment. The difference is related to how the contrasting songs and congregational singing have shaped the expectations of worshippers.

In the past and living memory of many, hymns and gospel songs (with hymnals, organs and pianos) were the most important musical materials used in the Protestant worship tradition and they functioned in a traditional worship service in a number of ways: they created a bond within the congregation; they were a means of response in the liturgy; they signalled points of transition in the service; and were an important means of theological education (Ward, 2005). The recent advent of the contemporary worship repertoire and how it is used has sprung from and continues to be influenced by neo-Pentecostalism, or the charismatic renewal movement which emerged in the Western world during the 50's and 60's (Hustad, 1993; Liesch, 2001; Ward, 2005).

The more experientially-based theology and worship practices of this movement challenge the rather rationalistic ethos of worship in most traditions and denominations, including Roman Catholic, and shift the emphasis to experientialism (Ward, 2005). Since evangelicals have always included in their theology and practice a celebration of experience, especially seen in the necessity of conversion – being born again – as well the pervasive use of songs for their affect, the new choruses from the charismatic movement are easily assimilated, along with the possibility of more demonstrative worship behaviours.

> The charismatic worship song is not primarily a means to teach doctrine. Neither is it a way to create a flow or to punctuate worship. While singing in charismatic worship may generate a feeling of togetherness, the songs are not primarily meant as a means to generate this feeling. The contemporary worship song occupies a particular space in charismatic spirituality; it is a means to a personal encounter with God. (Ward, 2005, p.198)

A personal encounter with God has been described by interviewees in this research as communicating with God. It is the reciprocal nature of any communicative encounter that gives rise to the need to know that our message has been received and fully understood by whom we address. In human terms, such assurance is perceived by what is said back and how it is said and by ways the body speaks back to us in gesture, eye contact and stance. But in Christian worship, we sing to the unseen and so the communicative process of worship-singing is usually understood as being through faith. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen" (Hebrews 11:1, King James Version). Best (2003) comments on this important Christian concept to say: "Faith does not bring substance and evidence to something; faith is itself substance and evidence even in the absence of the very things for which faith hopes" (p. 29). But those who want to really worship want to get to the place where they feel near to God and feel they are communicating with a Deity that has no physical presence and therefore offers no voiced or embodied response to their adoration. Perhaps it is because of this absence and silence that achieving a feelingful response in and to worship singing and song has become so important. And not only because it is deemed authentic worship but also because these feelings may be recognized as a response that encompasses a "reply" from God who therefore must be near. And if this is so, then these generated feelings may grant assurance that the singing worshipper is in communion with God and has been heard, understood and accepted.

Best (2003) issues a warning that if this need for felt resonance becomes the substance and evidence of real worship and the confirmation of the nearness of God – the rightful place of faith – we can justifiably question whether what is described as really

worshipping is faithful worship. Best (2003) also warns that this created dependence may constitute a step towards idolatry.

> [I]dolatry is the act of shaping something that we then allow to shape us. We craft our own destiny and then act as if it were supernaturally revealed…we are blinded by a simple contradiction: what we serve is made out of the same stuff that in other circumstances serves us. (p. 163)

> When we come to the writings of the New Testament…we learn that idolatry takes in everything that stands in the way of a direct, faith-substantiated life of continuous worship. (p. 164)

Witvliet (1997) observes that the idea that song and singing brings to the worshipper a sense of God's presence is a sacramental view of music. Ward (2005) explains this in more detail:

> In Catholic theology God meets the worshipper in the bread and wine of the communion service. In charismatic worship the songs function in a very similar way as the means of encounter with God. For the churches of the Reformation the ministry of word has replaced the centrality of the Catholic Mass. Here God comes to the worshipper through the reading of Scripture and through the preaching of the gospel. These churches of 'the word' locate the presence of God in these acts of witness and proclamation. For the charismatic worshipper, though many still value the sermon and, indeed, the act of communion, encounter with God is located primarily in the singing of songs and in the intimate times of prayer and ministry that are often the climax of a time of worship. This means that

> as the Mass is for Catholics and the sermon is for Protestants, so the singing of songs for charismatics. This emphasis upon the singing of songs and worship as encounter with God came with the spreading influence of the charismatic movement. (p. 199)

The Musical Leaders and Accompanists

Originality and contextualization

In the past ten years, there has been an explosion of music produced in the "Praise and Worship" genre. A visit to the website http://www.worshipmusic.com quickly demonstrates the vastness of the resources available to the public. Worship leaders find material for their congregations from these mostly recorded versions as well as those sung and experienced in live music-based worship settings.

The primary source from which Brian, the Worship Team leader, chooses the choruses for congregational singing is recordings and for this discussion of originality and contextualization, it is helpful to quote again Brian's reasoning.

> Even though I have a musically literate group of musicians, when I introduce to them a new chorus, I just give them words and chords and recordings. The reason is that if I learn a song from a recording, from there it's easy to type out the text [and chord changes]. Piano realizations [as published] are almost uniformly horrendous, particularly when there's syncopation and stuff like that. What you get in the piano realization can sometimes be less helpful than if you didn't have it at all, just as far as backbeat and swinging things and stuff like that. So very

> often I'll just learn the song, choosing stuff that's simple to be learned by the congregation and so generally it's simple for me just to pick up from listening; I won't have the benefit of anything other than lyrics in some cases. (Brian)

This method of transmission of choruses is so common that there are numerous websites from which text and chord changes can be downloaded and printed. Often there are slight differences between the websites in their reproduction of a particular song; keys may be different, chord changes may be more or less complex and small changes may be found in the lyrics. (All this begs the questions raised by copyright laws.) Lyrics and chord changes are the essentials needed for a typical band to produce a live performance as it is assumed that those accessing the information already have the tune available to them through other media, most likely CD or DVD or oral transmission. The guitarists and keyboard players do not necessarily need to know the melody to begin their participation as they will follow the lyrics, changing chords when indicated on the downloaded, photocopied or hand written material. The singing members of the ensemble will reproduce the melody of the song as they have aurally learned it, with the rest of the ensemble accompanying them.

These raw materials are common and need to be "translated" into the language of the local scene which is circumscribed by the abilities of the musicians and the instrumentation available. Eldridge is a great example of this need to adapt as their instrumentation is not that of authentic popular music or what is usually found in contemporary music-based worship events, the absence of a drum set and the presence of a mandolin-banjo being truly unique. How the realization of the song comes about is within the discretion of Brian, the leader of the Worship Team. He listens to the recorded

source to reduce it to its basic components: the text, melody and chord changes and rhythmic feel. He then supplies his musicians with a written copy of the lyrics with chord changes above the appropriate syllables; the musical feel is verbally and musically demonstrated in rehearsals. The songs' skeletal structure thus becomes the material from which a reconstruction is undertaken by the entire ensemble. Within these structures the band must develop its own rhythmic ideas, perhaps simplify or complicate the harmony, incorporate the melodic instruments by allowing players to improvise their own melodic lines – "fills" or countermelodies. The form of the song may be amended, and especially in the case of short choruses, a scheme may be created that uses some repetition to elongate the piece. With all this liberty, it is possible for the ensemble to impose a complete musical style on a melody (e.g. country, straight ahead rock, reggae, folk, Celtic etc.) within the parameters of their ability and available instrumentation.

```
                VERSE 1:
//D        D/F#       G          D
Amazing grace how sweet the sound
//      D                      A
That saved a wretch like me.
//  D         D/F#       G       D
I once was lost, but now am found
//     D          G    A  .D
Was blind but now I see
```

Figure 2: Lyrics and chord changes

All these possibilities and more will usually be realized by experimentation and discussion among the ensemble, the leadership being much more egalitarian than authoritarian. When the final product of the process is offered to the congregation, it is recognized as that which has been re-created, arranged and given unique characteristics

by the local musicians. In this way, the interpretation of the original recorded performer(s) and the entire technical and musical construction of the commercial product may be disregarded or greatly amended in favor of the possibilities inherent in the local resources. Songs are therefore introduced to the congregations through the discourses of the band; this is local, from the people to the people, and in the case of Eldridge, delivered relatively unmediated: that is, the amplification is such that it is not more powerful in decibels than that of the congregational singing. This is especially important in the case of the singers in the Worship Team. Individuality, created by a prominent or overpowering presence of an amplified singer, has been subverted, being submitted to and blended into the collective voice of the congregation.

All this creates a local authenticity; the band is formed by what is there. While interviewing the people of Eldridge I heard no sense of loss or a diminished value given to the Worship Team because there is no regular drummer or full set of drums. In fact, the unique instrumentation, especially the mandolin-banjo, was noted as positive. When I asked the pastor about any musical and stylistic changes that he might envision for the future, his response was, "You've got to work with the people you've got." This too is the attitude of Brian, the leader of the Worship Team: "What we have is what we have."

Musical leaders, congregational singers and technology

In what most often seems to be a united effort of the congregation and the accompanying musicians, there is always the potential for fracture resulting in the accentuation of one or the other and possible competition between them. In addition, the presence and presentation of two musical styles in a blended service presents many

possibilities for conflict. All the processes necessary to create congregational song are directed towards the production of these two distinct styles of song and accompaniment; at Eldridge they are "Hymns" and "Worship Team," and some elements will inevitably accentuate or exacerbate any stylistic preferences held by the congregational singers. Given the pressures present in preferences and practices, how do congregational singers and their leaders perform together with a sense authenticity?

In the setting of congregational singing, the relationship between the music makers in the pews and those seen to be "other than" or "leaders" – the organist, the instrumentalists of the band, the singers with microphones – is complex and fragile, and at times misunderstood. The sense of purpose (telos) is sometimes misplaced, misinterpreted or unrecognized and can be the cause of some frustration and confusion.

It is assumed that the instrumentalists have enough musical skills to execute the selected music. It is desirable and normal that they have prior knowledge of the songs selected for any given Sunday service and presumably have prepared their part of the music-making before the worship event. Thus they will be able to play in the service in a performance manner: skillfully, completely and uninterruptedly (Godlovitch, 1998). Patty, a congregational singer, reflects generally on the musical competence of the accompanying individuals or ensemble:

> It becomes very clear if the band knows what they are doing or if they don't. There is within the song a sort of fluidity; things within the music are working together well and there are easy transitions. I can allow for mistakes of course because I've been on the other side in a worship band and I know that things happen. But when it's consistent that people aren't sure who to look to when

> they're stopping and things like that, it's very easy for me to get distracted by that. It makes it easier for us as a congregation to sing along with that music if we don't have to think about that music: we don't have to think about "Ooh, what's happening?" or "Why it is slow?" or "Why is it faster?" or things like that. I think it makes it easier to worship. (Patty)

Contrast this necessary competence with the congregational singers: they are not required to have any particular level of skill to sing the songs of worship, nor is it necessary that they all have prior knowledge or preparation of the specific songs for the service – some songs may even be new to some or all. However, it is advantageous that individuals in the pew know the selected songs well enough to glean something from the experience of singing as an act of worship. But because it is a large group activity, it is possible that the singing of a song is carried to an uninterrupted completion by only a portion of the congregation. The fact that some singers make mistakes or stop singing is relatively inconsequential; it has little effect on the performance. This kind of failure is permissible because there is an aggregate musical outcome that overshadows the individual effort. No matter what the level of preparedness, the congregation will sing any song as best they can in the moment of encounter.

This should not be the case for the accompanists as they are more individually prominent due to their use of amplification (including the organ) and bear the responsibility for servant-leadership. By virtue of this inequality of preparation and skill, the instrumentalists may assume the place of prime agents in the execution of music with the congregation. It should be noted again that the undisputed historic position in the Protestant worship tradition is that congregational singers are the most important music-

makers. Therefore, by implication, all instrumentalists should be in a secondary role; but, in reality, as leaders and as accompanists they are a particular type of performer and also have the advantage of electronic amplification. To a large degree they fulfill the following description from Godlovitch (1998) with my own additions in square brackets:

> [Accompanists of congregational song as] performers generally have intentions regarding their audiences [or the congregational singers] which are absent when they play alone. Such intentions are integral to performance. The wish is to do something to or for that audience, to change it, to control its response, to work its feelings. None of this makes sense when playing alone. (p. 42)

To put it another way, the accompanying individual or group (instrumentalists and lead singers) are performers that have or should have a design to their activities that includes the congregational singers. The Eldridge organist describes his experience:

> When I first started years and years and years ago, I thought of myself purely as an accompanist; I'm just sort of playing along with the congregation. I very quickly learned, however, that that is impossible as an organist. The more you listen to the congregation, the more derailed you become. So very soon after that, I quickly learned "Ok, one must lead" and one must tell them exactly what to do and one must tell them where they're going to breath, how fast they're going to do it, what key they're going to do it in and where the pauses are and how long between verses the breaks are going to be. So, being a musician myself, and having a lot of experience with that, a lot of that came as second nature. But I definitely feel that I lead the hymns regardless of who's actually on the podium. We've experimented with many different kinds of hymn leading over the years.

> We've had some ministers stand and actually conduct the congregation. That can be ok if that person and myself are in agreement on what's coming out. But sometimes that's not always the case, so because I have the bigger voice, I usually win. So for the most part, I see my specific role as organist playing for the hymns mostly as the leader of the hymns in an unspoken kind of way. (Todd)

In a strange way, from the congregational singers' perspective, any music-making other than their own singing should be heard, but not noticed in some ways. It is best encountered by the congregational singers not as a competing entity or as something that draws attention to itself, but as a supporting and enabling agency to their singing. But this comfortable partnership can be difficult to achieve because the congregation is not the prime source of song in some of its most important elements: the accompanists or other leaders determine the actual song to be sung, its place in the service order and its presentational form, tempo, key, and overall feel. Even in the most obvious ingredient necessary for the integrity of performance – continuity – the accompanying musicians are the leaders and the congregational singers follow.

The ability of the congregational singer-performer to sing with a sense of continuity is essential to his or her capacity to worship and is confirmed by the report that any noticed incompetence in the accompanying musician(s) is usually a distraction. The band's or organist's sounds are foundational to the singers' music-making, and as such must be so secure that the congregation is also able to produce a continuous song, being completely free from distractions and interruptions caused by the accompaniment. This aspect of musical competence and resulting performance integrity is a shared goal of both pew singers and accompanists; it is expected and non-negotiable.

This said, the discrepancy between the required skills of the accompanists and the congregation can have consequences when using differing musical references when performing. The organist always and only uses a hymnal to produce his renditions of the congregational song, but the majority of the Eldridge congregation reference only the projected words of the hymns (and choruses); a small minority use the hymnal when the sung material is taken from it. The following incident of the *Doxology* is taken from my field notes and demonstrates the potential for performance breakdown.

> The first hymn for the day was listed as #625 *Doxology.* When we began to sing, it was apparent that the organ rendition was different from what the congregation was expecting and singing. This is a very mainstream hymn tune and text, but the first line was sung in a very disjointed manner as the congregations' version clashed with that of the organist's. When writing these notes, I looked up the music in the hymnal and discovered that #624 is also *Doxology,* but in a different, less used rhythmic configuration. The organist was apparently playing #624 and the congregation expected and was singing the more familiar version #625. The mistake was clearly on the part of the organist as the vast majority of the singers did not have their hymnals open and just sang what they knew as the usual and listed version (#625).
>
> Because the text is always offered on the screen, most of the congregational singers do not use the hymnal in order to participate in singing. As a result, the tune is not referenced visually and the singers' memory becomes the only source of the tune and is assumed to be the same as what the organ will offer as accompaniment. In this case it was not. The problem that occurred on Sunday

was good example of one of the weaknesses of relying on projected text as the main reference. The music becomes vulnerable.

This is a wonderful illustration of the move on the part of the congregation from the use and reliance on written music to that of aural-oral music and the resulting difference in modes of music making between the organist and the congregation.

When choruses are being sung, written music from the chorus repertoire is never available to the congregation; therefore, the Eldridge congregation rely on their individual and collective memory as well as the aural leadership given by the lead singer(s) of the Worship Team delivered through the PA system. There is no strong and consistent playing of the tune by a melodic instrument in the band; the lead vocalists are amplified and are the major melodic reference. The violin and mandolin-banjo usually play a counter melody, but if they do play melody, it is not prominent, being buried in the texture of the overall sound of the band. By contrast, the hymnbook is always available to the congregation in complete musical form but even so, most of the congregation use the projected text, assuming that they know the music. When a hymn is sung, it is always accompanied by the organ, which directly reproduces the four parts written for singers as printed in the hymnal. Rather than supplying supportive harmony and rhythm around a vocally produced melody, as is the case of the Worship Team, the organ plays all of the vocal parts from the hymnal: the tune with three lines of harmony. If the congregation has any doubt as to what they are being called upon to sing, they have the direct realization of it by the accompaniment as well as easy access to the hymnal.

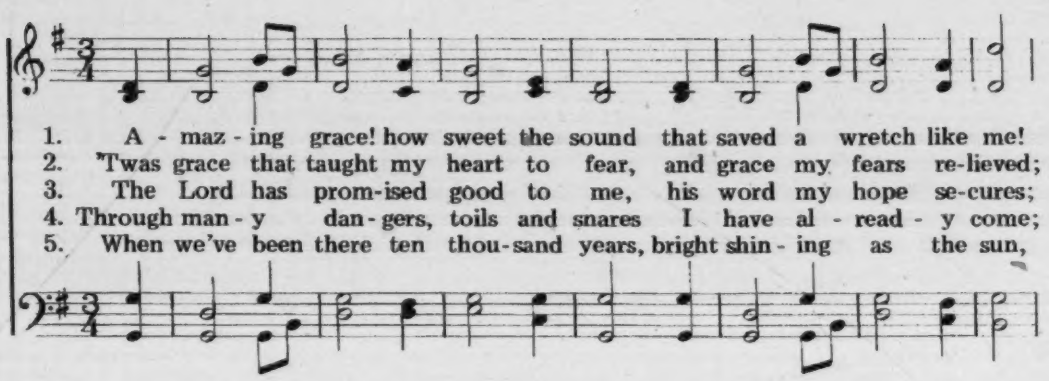
1. A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears re-lieved;
3. The Lord has prom-ised good to me, his word my hope se-cures;
4. Through man - y dan - gers, toils and snares I have al - read - y come;
5. When we've been there ten thou-sand years, bright shin - ing as the sun,

Figure 3: Lyrics and music from a hymnal

The fact that most of the congregation choose not to use the hymnal, an older technology, and favour projected text is an example of the way most people naturally engage song today – by ear. CD's are listened to and song texts are printed on the CD jacket to be read, as was often the case for old vinyl records and cassette tapes. Before the introduction of the overhead projector technology and it's more sophisticated computer generated offspring, the only access by the congregational singer to the text of any congregational song was by use of a hymnal or spiral bound collection of choruses, also written out in four-part form or as a melody and text with guitar chord changes given above the staff. In these sources, the written music was part of the presentation; the songs were within sight as well as sound. Now, with use of projection, music is visually absent and only available aurally.

However, it should be noted that there is a long tradition of publishing in book form only the words of the hymn and these can still be found in use by a few present-day non-evangelical church communities. In some older hymnals, the text was printed separate from the lines of music, although appearing on the same page. The fairly modern editorial practice of offering the text directly under the musical symbols – the norm for

most evangelical hymnals (as is the case at Eldridge) – would seem to be ideal for the encouragement of musical literacy. At Eldridge, the retention of the pew hymnal apparently has become "the burden of a great potential" when projected text is offered and becomes the preferred reference for congregational singers.

Given this dependence on aural leadership, a relationship of trust between congregation and accompanists is multifaceted and acute. How the leaders use their technology, the manner in which they present themselves and their music to the congregation can be critical to participation-performance of the congregation. Ruth, a young woman from Eldridge, told me this story.

> The one thing that I don't like about the new choruses is to go to church and watch the band sing…When we were looking for churches, we spent about six months going to different churches and there were a few churches where you were just a spectator for the whole thing and you look around and you're one of 10 people actually singing. You're not sure if you're actually supposed to be singing or if they just have the words up there so you can look at them. I think volume was a big part of it as well as bad acoustics. You can't hear yourself sing, so it's difficult to sing but there really is no need for you to sing. It's being done for you. It was fairly distracting to know that there were so few people who were worshipping with you and that you were kind of an oddity because you were singing. And it's very frustrating when you're trying actually to listen to the people singing around you and all you hear is the guitar.

George, an older member from Eldridge, reports his impressions of the intention of another song leader.

I've visited a church where I personally had trouble singing. The first thing that comes to mind is the volume – it's a small church, physically. The congregation is small, too. And yet it somewhat disturbs me that they felt they needed to use microphones right up to the mouth and fairly loud. I was not aware of people around me singing because of the volume from the band, and there were only four of them. There's a person on keyboard who also sings, a bass guitarist, and the leader sings and plays guitar and there's a fourth person who sings usually, and I can't recall what she plays – maybe percussion periodically. But again it was very much the volume: into the microphones, the amplification of the music, the instrumentation. It seems to be more related to a group in a concert, making a presentation as opposed to wanting us to be part of them, of what is being said.

However, I again attended that church at a time when the usual music leader was away. Apparently her background included some time as an entertainer and she seems to have carried that over into the leading of music in the service. This last time I was there the worship team did lead the singing much more in a way that, to me, facilitated congregational singing.

By contrast, the team at Eldridge are expecting us to sing and the whole presentation they have is one of "we're helping you, we're leading you." We just know that. I guess the volume is one thing. The vocals and the instrumentation are at a level that is clearly, to me, supportive; the instrumentation is supportive to the congregational singing and the volume of the voices of those who are singing, while they're there, particularly if we're learning something new, they are very clear. But once the congregation catches on it's always sort of participatory. If I

> were coming into the congregation as someone new, I would realize that everybody was singing and feel that I wanted to be a part of it. So maybe it's developed over a period of time. But to contrast the two, the worship team in the other church dominates whereas at our church, there's clearly a sense of providing leadership and "we want you to participate." (George)

In these experiences, we see the fragility of the relationship between what is discerned as performing leaders and the congregations desire to perform. Unlike the organ or piano accompanying hymns, the worship band is a self-contained musical entity because it includes amplified singers; the congregation is not needed to complete the ensemble. The models for Worship Teams are commercial rock and pop bands which are not intentionally constructed as sing-a-long ensembles. In the recent past, unrehearsed communal singing was invited in a few popular practices; for example, the music of "Sing along with Mitch" (follow the bouncing ball) or folk songs sung in small intimate venues or at Hootenannies. In these kinds of musical events, it was intended that the "folk" sing with the musicians on stage and their use of acoustic instruments with sound re-enforcement (as different from amplification) reflected and allowed for this. However, since the '60s, most song forms popular in the youth culture are dependent on technology, using highly-amplified instrumentation and presented by personalities in a manner that is performative, stylized, visceral, often within a spectacular entertainment format. This also applies to the parallel world of Christian popular music. As a member of an audience (literally the hearers) you can sing along if you like – it is part of the fun – but it adds nothing to the sound of the show unless deliberately included as a novelty and almost always without the band playing at their normal volume.

By contrast, in the setting of a church worship service, the congregation expects to make an important contribution to the music of praise and not be an audience for an apparent performance. Their singing is meant to be heard as it is the people's musical offering of worship (liturgy) and is central to their purpose – they came to church to worship in song. I maintain that they are the most important musicians in the room and it is obvious that organists and worship bands are technically able to adjust their volume levels in favour of the congregational voice. Why, then, in many churches, is the complaint still made that "the band is too loud"? For contemporary musician-leaders, is this a problem solved by simply adjusting their sound level? I don't think so. I believe that the volume level of the band is an example of one of the conflicting authenticities present in contemporary worship. In the following paragraphs I will examine these competing authenticities and how they are discerned.

Worship Teams are in the middle of a matrix of cultural discourses, many of which are cross-cultural. They have been given important ministry responsibility that churches see as pivotal to their quest for cultural relevance (a term that in my experience is almost never unpacked and explored) and an assumed appeal to the younger generation. In this role, they are expected to be culture bearers of a generalized popular musical world and an embodied musical-cultural bridge between those outside and inside the church. Both the musicians and the church congregation have little or no awareness or preparation for the complexities inherent in these expectations and this becomes evident when disagreements occur over the musical practices for Sunday worship.

I have observed that, as is the case of most pop musicians, many Worship Team members in most churches have had little or no formal music training, except perhaps the

keyboard player. (Eldridge is an obvious exception to this.) However, they all have acquired at least a working knowledge of popular music forms from MuchMusic, MTV, Country Music Television, radio, CD's and the many other forms of digital media. These contemporary musicians, many of whom are quite young, know how to effectively employ pop music artefacts – for example, instruments, microphones, amplifiers, and lighting – and are fairly fluent in popular musical styles and performance practices, all of which have powerful symbolic significance within the culture at large. And they are required to use these discourses in varying degrees within a church service on a regular basis.

Older members of the Worship Team may have experiential familiarity with historic hymnody and the broad issues surrounding church music practice. However, if members are in their teens or early twenties, it is entirely possible that they know only the contemporary format of worship. The worship song repertoire used in a contemporary worship service is usually learned by the band by ear from highly produced CD's performed by stars of the world of Christian pop music. Some of these songs may be singable by a congregation, others not so. How to lead a congregation in worship singing is caught by imitating what has been experienced in worship services or inspired by commercial DVD's of major music worship gatherings and perhaps enhanced by attending workshops given at worship conferences. These helpful industry sponsored events usually include classes on how to be a more proficient instrumentalist and how to make the band sound better using the latest electronics. Many of these local musical leaders also experience live "worship concerts" put on by a professional worship band that comes to town promoting its newest songs for use in the local church.

These factors are common to the background of many contemporary worship leaders; they have their roots in the prevailing popular music culture mixed with contemporary Christian music ministry practices. It gives some weight to the admirable goal of authenticity within both the popular musical world as well that of the contemporary church. These worthy servants want to be the best musician-leaders of worship that they can be. However, given the cultural shaping of many of these contempory church musicians, it is easy to understand that they may be narrowly focused on their role as "the band up front" and thus the voice of the singing congregation, an unknown phenomenon in the pop music world, may get overlooked. On Sunday, the worship team may appear to be performing, the chief clue being that they have not given sonic space for the congregation as the amplified singers and instrumentalists fill the room with their sound. But this is what popular music is supposed to do: create a complete and powerful soundscape. In so doing, the unamplified and unrehearsed congregation gets buried in the quest for a musical authenticity where congregational singing seems to be, at best, a secondary consideration or, in the case of the larger world of pop music, a foreign activity. From this perspective, just turning the volume down in favour of the congregation is not a credible solution because there is no credible problem. The band is so loud that the congregation is not heard and this the way it should be as the band grows as an authentic pop music entity.

> [T]he rock aesthetic…is as much based on the technology of concert amplification as on [recording] studio equipment. "Live" rock music has thus become music that is super live! "Electronic amplification," in [Philip] Brophy's words "is integral to the cultural and social growth of Rock. It changed not only

> the sound of instruments but also the scale of the live event which contained them, thereby determining the nature of the audience experience." (Frith, 1996b, p. 239)

On the other hand, if the band is balanced so that the congregation can be heard, they are leaning in the direction of authentic church music, giving sonic space to the congregation. The nature of the relationship between the congregation and the other musical entities present in a contemporary worship service depends on which of these authenticities prevails – popular music or church music.

The mixing of two kinds of musical genre, hymns and choruses, brings with it different expectations that Frith (1996b) calls genre rules. Value judgements that are made by the musical leaders and the congregational singers are based on these rules that I have more generally characterised as competing authenticities. Frith (1996b) points out:

> It is genre rules which determine how musical forms are taken to convey meaning and value, which determines the aptness of different sorts of judgements, which determine the competence of different people to make assessments. It is through genres that we experience music and musical relations, that we bring together the aesthetic and the ethical. (p. 95)

The Worship Team at Eldridge is exceptional in almost every way, including their bending of the genre rules embedded in pop music to accommodate their bias towards the production of authentic church music with participation by the congregation held as the top priority. The important issue of inequality of decibel levels has been addressed by the organist, sound technicians and Worship Team. Electronic amplification (or in the case of pipe organs, wind power) can easily negate the unaided sounds of the congregation to the

point of discouragement. When there are amplified leader-vocalists, the entire song, not just the accompanying textures, can be so prominent that those who should be accompanists appear to be self-sufficient. However, the unamplified congregational singers at Eldridge recognise that they are needed to complete the ensemble performance and feel welcome. In this case, meaningful singing by the congregation has been included in the presentation of the band and the organist, and the now enfranchised congregational singers do not need to adopt other options, the most obvious of which is just listening. The accompanists have, by their own action, avoided the creation of an audience and the possibility of transforming themselves into a complete performance ensemble as perceived by this new audience.

To quote Godlovitch (1998): "Performances are specifically and directly intended, designed or meant for audiences. As purposeful activities, their telos is to be experienced by those for whom the performer prepares them" (p. 28). In the case of overpowering bands or organs, it is possible that the musicians' purpose (telos) remains in their own minds that of gracious accompanists but by the sheer volume of their sound, they may inadvertently invite the interpretation by the rest of the congregation that only listeners are needed, not co-music-makers. Given this innocence, the accompanists remain, in their own estimation, helping and leading the congregation but are seen (heard) by their newly-formed audience as performers. A disconnect and contradiction has now been produced – the telos understood by the band and their telos as perceived by the congregation are different. The congregation cannot perform for God because of the unwelcome performance of the accompanists created by the volume imbalance. Ironically, performers

and audience, both having been unwittingly created, experience in different terms performance failure.

It seems that, ideally, the instrumentalists should be heard and seen to be hospitable musicians, inviting and enabling the congregation to make music with them, not performing for them. The congregation is thereby understood to be important for the completion their efforts. When this is demonstrated, as is the case at Eldridge, primacy is given by the band or organist to the congregation and in return, the pew singers sense a security in the openness of their accompanists. They know that their singing is valued and desired and will be accepted as part of the sound matrix of worshipful music. The telos – end or purpose – is consistent; all music makers understand that they are together performing for God.

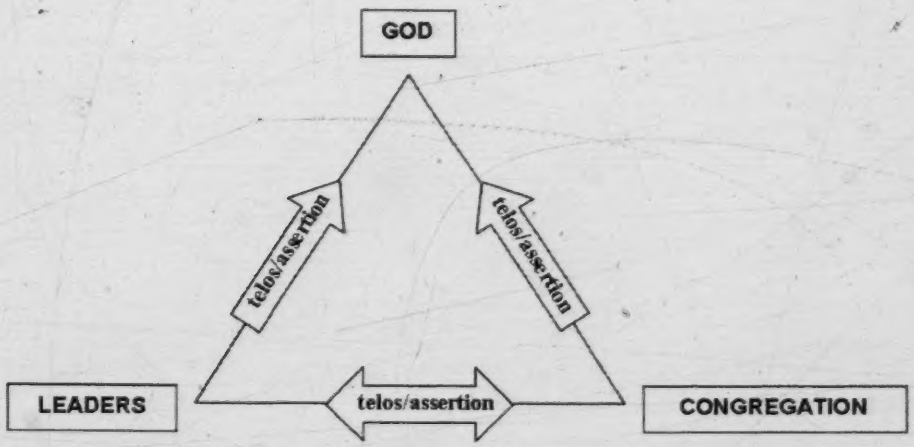

Figure 4: The primary performance relationships of worship

Conclusion

We can no longer assume that congregational singing is uniformly valued or is in practise a straightforward matter of singing our faith together. I have argued that, in a multigenerational church that produces a blended service, conflicting authenticities are encountered every Sunday. The expectations for personal interaction with song and the experience of singing are diverse, influenced by past experiences both in and out of the church: at camps, concerts, participation in other Christian traditions and media. In addition, our highly individualistic culture has propelled us into a quest for personal authenticity, changing how we sing together and this seems to be more of a concern of the younger worshipper than the older. However, the multigenerational context of congregational singing also has a moderating effect on those who would pursue freedom of expression, a core value of personal authenticity.

The paradigm of performance is helpful to explain the intent and resulting assertion that is at the core of worship singing. It is this assertion that differentiates "just singing" from that which is deemed to be real worship singing, given to an audience of One. Real worship requires a personal attitude, an attention to self, which is re-enforced by the predominance of the personal pronouns used in all kinds of evangelical songs – hymns, gospel songs and choruses. To make the song real for "me" and that "I" am declaring whatever is expressed in the song, the singer must make the assertion that what he or she is singing is to be taken as true on multiple levels. The assertion of a kind of truth is also a characteristic of performance and begins to help us understand some truth aspects of congregational singing, but falls short of the desire of some to feel that their "true self" is being expressed. For those conditioned by contemporary expression, this

connection with the self requires feelings and resonances that go beyond declarations of theologically true statements to expression of heartfelt sentiments. Therefore, performance authenticity can sometimes be mistaken for personal authenticity; put another way, singing may be seen and heard as sincere and authentic, but it is not necessarily so.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Study

Method

For this research project, I designed different types of questions to be asked of the musical leaders than those questions to be used to interview the people in the pews because I recognized that these two entities are dissimilar in many ways and I wanted to explore and exploit the differences. The leaders who prepare for their tasks need more skills than the congregational singers. They are a stable, regularly constituted musical group and, therefore, the questions for the musical leaders were formulated within an ethnographic frame. These questions opened the path to expose the musical leaders' "shared beliefs, practices, artefacts, knowledge and behaviours" (Bresler, 1995, p. 3). In contrast, the congregation is a much more loosely bound musical entity, a group comprised of whoever chooses to attend any Sunday service and joins in singing with the others. As individuals, they may or may not be musically adept, but together they become ad hoc music-makers. Therefore, the questions for the congregation were designed to elicit descriptions of experiences of singing – for individuals to tell their stories.

The resulting anecdotes gave the basic material for identifying and exploring phenomenological themes around which I have written descriptively and interpretively, uncovering and exploring the many layers of the experience of singing in a blended worship service. (See Chapter 4) Though the sets of questions had differing intents, all interviews were semi-structured and the conversations roamed. As a result, from both the congregation and the leadership came descriptions and observations about song and

singing that fed into ethnographic themes, including generational differences. (See Chapters 3 & 5)

By using phenomenology and ethnography in a blended manner, I accepted that the two methods of inquiry led to different places. Put in overly simple terms, ethnography sees the individual subject in cultural relationship and tries to discover the strands of ethnographic meanings that connect the subject to others in a definable group; whereas phenomenology sees individuals in their existential situatedness and embedded in their varieties of lived experience that are the stuff of the life of all humans. Despite the seemingly oppositional directions of these two disciplines, both begin from a middle ground in recognizing that the individual is always in and influenced by a community. The phenomenological inquiry has shown that there are multiple experiential dimensions of singing together, some that work against a conception of togetherness. But at the same time, the setting in which individuals experienced the phenomenon of communal singing – a church congregation – gave to the phenomenological themes an important link to what the musical ethnography uncovered and defined – the nature of the aggregate.

After exploring both lived experience and ethnographic themes in this research, I examined the findings through other paradigms that encompass the experience and reality of the individual in community: performance, with its outwardness of "giving" and essential inwardness of "assertion" as expounded primarily by Mark (1981) and Godlovitch (1998) and also, more significantly, the ideas of authenticity that Charles Taylor (1991) espouses. (See Chapter 5) Taylor shows us that individuality must encompass communality in what he calls "a horizon of significance" comprised of

people, ideas and places that are outside the self and this horizon is an essential and inescapable component in the formation and experience of the individual.

By using phenomenology and musical ethnography together, despite their emphasis on either the cultural or the existential, their confluence, as explored under the frame of authenticity and performance, opened the way for exploration and definition of the tension between the inwardness and outwardness of the experience of the singing in a community in ways that either one of these methods may have missed.

A Blended Service

Taylor's concept of authenticity constitutes a critique of the commonly held belief that there exists an almost insurmountable tension between individuality and communality in our culture, most clearly expressed in the idea that there is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. "I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else's" (Taylor, 1991, p. 29). I have shown that this aberrant view of individuality (Taylor's terms) and its inherent push for freedom of expression is an influential force in congregational singing, especially within those who prefer contemporary worship expressions and is a theme that emerged in the research of the blended services at Eldridge.

The church leadership tried to come to grips with this tension. Anticipating that a congregational split would be inevitable if they offered their people the choice of musically different services, they created a blended service with the intention of maintaining church unity. As George, a long-time member reported: "The feeling was that if we went to completely different services – a contemporary-traditional split, which

is done in some places – we would end up having two congregations that really didn't know each other and had little in common."

The underlying assumption in the rejection of two services that accentuated the contemporary-traditional split is that musical and worship style can separate people from each other, essentially creating two distinct units. The leadership assumed that by offering the same Eldridge sponsored worship experience to all who entered the building, no matter the time of the service, they would sustain their identity as one congregation. As a result, a blended style was adopted for both services, using the two styles of music that were assumed to be divisive – contemporary and traditional – in each service, hoping that the blend would maintain unity and at the same time acknowledge that there were differences of musical preference within the congregation. Personal preference, the inner sense of what "I" like, was expected to be balanced somehow with what "we" like.

This project has explored the state of this music-based union and demonstrated that personal configurations of the inward-outward dimensions of song and singing, as experienced in a blended service, can both unify and divide. Within Taylor's paradigm of authenticity, song and singing in a blended service have the power to affirm and enrich both individuality and community. However, when the popular form of authenticity, with its emphasis on self-fulfilment is brought to blended services, boundaries are often accentuated, others are excluded and, ironically, aspects of individuality and self-expression that are derived from and sustained by and in a community are denied.

It is interesting that, after the creation of two occasions for the same blended Sunday worship service, the Eldridge congregation declined numerically to the point of requiring only one weekly event to accommodate the population. Was this in any way

related to the nature of a blended service that does not highlight one musical style but creates an environment that demands many sorts of compromises? These questions may be the start of a trail to be followed by another research project.

Congregational Songs and Singing

In my analysis of congregational songs and how they are presented in the services at Eldridge, I concluded that, although a strict numerical balance is maintained between hymns and choruses sung by the congregation, the overall ethos of the service is weighted to traditional music. The organ prelude, the organ as the prominent accompaniment for the hymns, hymns interspersed with other acts of worship, the regular presence of a choir, the printed order of service in the bulletin and the display of hymn numbers on the board on the wall, the availability of hymnals – all these ingredients seem to be a conscious effort to maintain the structure, content and communication modes of a traditional evangelical worship service while adding projected text, a few current choruses and a band to accompany them. Nothing has been taken away from the expectations formed over the years. This is indeed the definition of a blended service offered by LaRue (2001) – the incorporation of contemporary music into traditional services.

In blended church services there are distinct styles of music and, in the case of Eldridge, these are produced distinctly. The diversity is viewed as a uniting force, presuming that each person will be satisfied by some of their music being offered as congregational song. In so doing, it is hoped that the identity of the church will remain intact, coalescing around the compromise represented in the blend. But what has

happened to the divisive potential of stylistic preference? Was this not a major motivating factor in the creation of the blended service? Do feelings of personal attachment to musical style disappear or alter in the blend? This study has shown that tensions associated with stylistic preference are still alive among some in the blended Eldridge congregation and more so in those who prefer what in reality is the minority style: the chorus and its attendant expressive individualism.

Many people may participate in the same music but experience it in different ways. Dueck (2003) observes that the "same music may be practised by younger and older generations, but understood differently" (p. 63). He further argues that musical genres as found in churches – at Eldridge they are labelled Hymns and Worship Team – are helpful in articulating an identity in that "the choice of genre allows each church to place themselves vis-a-vis other groups which share theological and social characteristics…and against groups which differ in some of these characteristics" (p. 235). Frith (1996a) articulates the possibility of identity formation this way:

> Music seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective…. It is in deciding – playing and hearing what sounds *right*... – that we both express ourselves, our own sense of rightness, and suborn ourselves, lose ourselves, in an act of participation. (p. 110)

However, this study has shown that in a blended environment, suborning or losing one's self is not a simple matter. The expression of self and Frith's sense of "rightness" take us to the struggle for authenticity which is part of the blended experience for many of the Eldridge singers. There remains in some worshippers a strong need for what they deem as

personal expression and this need is exacerbated and complicated by the presence of two genres of congregational song. This is not to say that this individual-within-communal tension is insurmountable, but it does propel individual singers towards finding ways to deal with participation in the other expression while hopefully maintaining some sort of authentic voice.

This need for authenticity when singing the other genre is most acutely found in those who prefer choruses and whose past worship practices include peer events where what is called "really worshipping" is enabled primarily by much repetition of songs and parts of songs and where varieties of physical expression while singing are normal and acceptable. This pattern is not the way choruses are embodied at Eldridge and it is clear that hymns, by their nature as well as presentation, bring significant obstacles for the expression of authentic contemporary worship.

The use of language in song can influence the consciousness of individuality and community. Personal pronouns can be singular or plural: "I" and "me," "we" and "us." This is not a genre specific issue because in the evangelical tradition, personal experience has historically been a central theme of all types of song, but it is now most prominently seen in the Praise and Worship choruses that dominate contemporary expressions of sung worship. The use of the singular and plural pronouns in song should be noted and monitored by those who select congregational song in an effort to maintain a reasonable balance against individualized engagement with song, especially choruses.

While the phenomenological themes of this study – modes of being-in-song-in-singing – have enabled us to see deeper into the nature of musical engagement, it is Taylor's authenticity, with its horizon of significance, that provides the kind of measure

of authenticity needed for singing a song of a musical genre that is not preferred. When a singer moves beyond the power of "my song" and is ready and able to find a wider authentic "me," she or he is free to search the horizon of significance for a paradigm that is within the sphere of whatever the song of the other represents that is more than "me." Many at Eldridge accept this challenge, and are able to value the presence of the other generation and grant that the other's worship songs are authentically theirs (of the other), and that the songs of the other also need to be expressed as "mine," authenticated by and within the shared context. For such people, this transaction has brought a sense of personal peace in community that has become important to their experience of blended congregational singing

The inward-outward tension is brought into focus when comparing the concepts of participation and performance: the distinction lies in the quality of engagement. Performance needs a special kind of concentration (Mark, 1981) that is not necessary for mere participation; the recognition of the presence of an audience – a distinct kind of outwardness – is the catalyst for the realization of performance. Put in the context of a blended worship service and its congregational song, mere participation – the (dis)engagements that are "just singing" – may not be enough to assure some that they have performed (worshipped) for God. The pressure to achieve an inner state that assures an outwardness in giving a performance to God (worship) is heightened and confused in contemporary-only worship events; here music-based worship is most clearly enacted. Here, the leaders of song are always called worship leaders and often say publicly that in their leading they are connecting people to God or leading them into worship or ushering people into the presence of God. All this seems to engender a response in the singer that

is only inward, perhaps in search of authentic worship, perhaps in an attempt to find an imminent god. Despite all this emphasis on inner experience, the phenomenological insights have shown that, when a congregation is singing, though we can see and hear the individual and collective outwardness of participation, no assumptions can be made about the inner state of any singer. It is from the inner dimensions of the individual that recognition of authenticity springs. In fact, the sense of any kind of authenticity while singing in a worship service seems to be contingent and more acutely so in a blended service.

Ideas of Worship

This project has shown that there is within a congregation a variety of ideas of worship held by individuals and they bring their notions of worship to the communal exercise of a Sunday service. A blended service, by definition, offers to the people two broad musical styles as possible expressions of worship. With all this diversity – the individuals' understandings of worship and their experience of it as they participate in different kinds of songs – there comes the potential for inner and outer conflict. This tension is often felt along generational borders.

Most, but not only, young worshippers are attracted to music-based contemporary worship practices where worship and singing are conflated; both have their beginning and end in an authentic and authenticating inward experience. From this place comes the outward action of worship-singing that may include other personal, physical expressions. This kind of worship is conceived as primarily inward, a construct of personal authenticity validated by song and singing and its attendant feelings and outward

gestures. It is important that there be an experience of what is interpreted as an awareness of the audience of One. In their view that worship is dependent on a specific kind of song and singing, these worshippers have limited their experience of worship and their use of song and may instrumentalize and devalue the aggregate nature of the congregation: the glory of the group, the "convocation," the importance of collectively singing together as the Body of Christ.

The older generation tends to see worship as an attitude stemming from an interior, personal commitment to God as different from, but not exclusive of an experience of God. This attitude then moves outward, permeating acts of worship that are not necessarily musical and less apt to supply personal authentication: the public reading of scripture, sermons, testimonies, public communal prayers. Worship of this kind does not need for validation the kind of focus given by singing and songs or the production of worshipful feeling. Songs of any style can therefore be sung as acts of worship without the expectation of felt communion with God in and because of singing. And, because there are no expectations of any sort of ecstasy, these worshippers are free to be surprised by any heightened awareness of their relationship with God they might experience in song or in any non-musical act of worship. Furthermore, they are not concerned if this doesn't happen.

I have shown that ideas of contemporary worship have been deeply influenced by the winds of the broader culture saturated with the need to be authentic, and as Taylor so lucidly explains, too often this authenticity is in the form of self-expression, an inwardness towards a self that has forgotten that it was formed in community. As Bell (1997) says: "The new paradigm is directed more inward than outward, apt to define

community and society in terms of the self rather than the self in terms of the community" (p. 241). Too often the individual quest for authenticity pulls in the opposite direction, away from a view that allows another cause, idea or person to be within a horizon of significance. However, some worshippers are able to deny for a time the personally expressive aspects of authentic worship as they expect it, with its inward journey towards "my" feelings about God. They are able to actively redefine authenticity to include, appreciate and participate in, perhaps even perform another's worship songs. When this inner transformation is accomplished, there can be a peaceful co-existence of difference which is necessary to sustain a blended worship community.

The Use of Technology

The presence and use of technology in its broadest conception has never been a simple matter for the practise of Christian worship. In the present era, with electronic wizardry linked so closely to music and its production, the use of technology in conjunction with congregational singing can be both a blessing and a bane. Through the use of amplification, large gatherings can enjoy intimate and quiet instruments and hear leaders-singers of all vocal strengths. Musicians and music lyrics can be seen by all through video projection.

But technology always brings gain and loss (Postman, 1993). According to the witness of worshippers, the forceful amplification of either the organ or the Worship Team can impinge on the ability of the congregation to hear and enjoy their own singing. A very loud band is common in contemporary-only worship services and, in large churches, is often combined with special lighting effects and projected visual images,

mimicking popular music events where a technologically created environment seems to be designed to dominate all senses. As Frith (1996b) explains: "[T]he rock aesthetic…is as much based on the technology of concert amplification as on [recording] studio equipment. 'Live' rock music has thus become music that is super live!" (p. 239). This "super live" musical presence, when produced in worship services, is an extreme ambience; it overpowers all other sound, it demands and commands all the attention.

For those who value the sound of communal singing, what is required is an environment that gently invites participation and in its meekness makes possible an hospitable interface of person and place. Context should not shift from being influential to assuming dominance and control; in the hands of a few, constructed experience can too easily become the manipulation of many. This danger should concern serious worshippers.

In most evangelical churches, the new technology of images on screens has usurped the place of hymnals in worship practice. This change has not gone un-noticed: Dawn (1999) devotes many pages to the gains and losses of each mode of presentation; but, for this discussion, I suggest that an important difference between projection of text on a screen and text in a book is ontological. By describing these contrasting presentations of song, I hope to infer how, by their very nature, hymnals and screens configure individuality and community.

Hymnals have three dimensions and occupy a three-dimensional space; they can be in homes, on pianos, in racks on the back of every pew or in the hands of singers, individuals or shared between two. The music and words contained in hymnals are available to singers anytime and any place the hymnal is present. A specific hymnal is an

unchangeable collection purchased by a community that deems its contents to be suitable for their communal worship over an extended period of time. The songs in the hymnal have been undergone rigorous scrutiny under a number of criteria by a panel of musicians, theologians, poets, and other sorts of editors. Their final choices have been sorted and arranged within the book in a way that is effective for use within a community of believers. It is a finished entity, all the contents of which are accessible at any time to all and anyone during a communal worship service or in a private setting.

Text, as it appears on a screen, is essentially two-dimensional (but the screen occupies three-dimensions). The text appears when needed and quickly disappears to make way for another. Even so, the location of the text is ambiguous and mysterious; when not on the screen, is it in the computer, on a memory disc, on a sheet of plastic? Is it still in a form that can be easily read? Is it digital? The character of projected text can be variable: size, font, colour, contrast with its background, its visual clarity is often diminished by ambient light, the distance between screen and singer changes depending on where the singer sits, and so on. This flexibility allows for variety and can create and maintain interest but, at the same time, may cause inconsistent readings by the singers. Text on a screen is viewed as a single source and as such assures that "everyone is on the same page." Text on a screen is within sight of all but not within reach and cannot be touched. To be used, these texts are dependant on a projector and screen. These intermediaries pose some challenges for portability and individual, private accessibility to the text. If they are in the right digital form, texts may be seen on a personal computer but their essential nature remains ephemeral.

What is the sum total of the repertoire of projected songs? The singing congregation sees no visible, physical context, no side-by-side existence with other texts that add up to a collection. These songs do not comprise a completed work, but are a series of fragments; in fact, a song in its entirety is rarely able to fit on a screen. Because of this open-endedness, the congregation has freedom to quickly introduce and participate in new songs, move with trends, and not be inhibited by the choices contained within a fixed entity. At the same time, the "loose leaf" approach affords little evidence that a song has been ascribed any sense of worth by others outside the immediate community, other than its current popularity.

These are two of the most obvious technological aspects of an evangelical worship environment. In the light of most churches' dependence on and use of amplification of music, research into how a specific church community uses sound technology and acoustical design and its impact on congregant's conceptions of singing and visceral experiences, including aural sensitivity, may prove fruitful. And what comparative merits or problems are presented by screen and book for visual perception, learning, retention and so on? There is no doubt in my mind that configurations of individuality and community are played out at various volumes and in ever-changing images as technology influences the content and context of a blended worship service.

Chapter 7 – Five Theses

I complete the dissertation with five thesis statements that are not conclusions in the strict sense, but position statements (in the etymological Greek sense of the term "thesis") that follow from the study.

1. The aberrant version of authenticity present in congregational singing, with its narrow focus on the self, needs be seriously evaluated by church leaders, especially those who lead and promote contemporary Praise and Worship singing. The arguments of Charles Taylor will not be sufficient for persuasive discussion as final authority is given by evangelicals to the scriptures. Therefore, many evangelical churches need to revisit the Great Commandments as given by Jesus Christ:

> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. (Matt. 22:37-39, New International Version)

These commands are well applied to the context of today's churches and worship practices by Viladesau (2000).

> The New Testament insistence that real love of God cannot exist without love of neighbor (1 Jn 4:20-21; cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12f., 17; Mt 25:31-46; Lk 10:25-37) redefines *love* in such a way that it surpasses mere *eros* toward God as the final Good…; it sees human love for God not as a simple drive

> toward happiness, conceived as self-fulfillment, but as a sharing in the divine way of being, which is self-giving love that is universal in extension. This kind of love demands a certain de-centering of the self that even appears as "loss" of self, "death" to self, in the realization of a higher, more total good. (p. 53)

2. A church that offers a musically blended service is uniquely positioned in North American society as one of few institutions where generations can regularly meet and mix, to work out and share a significant communal experience of spiritual, educational and cultural dimensions. This form of worship needs to be re-examined by church leaders as perhaps one of the best ways to publicly embody and demonstrate the selflessness that should be at the core Christian church life.

3. Evangelicals need to note the possibility that congregational singing as it has been historically valued and practised by Protestants may be lost to future generations, if present trends continue. As older members die, the majority congregational singers may be those who value personal authenticity over the collective. If this occurs, it is possible that congregational singing, as we now know it, will no longer be a premier event of a worship service but just one of many individualized options for how worshippers might respond to music in church. For some, "holy moshing" or other kinds of expressive movement may be a more powerful and personally significant act of worship than singing. Perhaps standing silently in the crowd, overwhelmed by the power of the live band and identifying with what they

are singing will be seen by some as worship enough. In this scenario, only God, the ultimate audience, can know that the "congregational" voice is not silent but internal. If the worshipper does sing out loud, perhaps it will be acceptable that he is drowned out by the band – it is a safe and comfortable mode of being in what is understood as an overwhelming sonic-aesthetic-spiritual experience before God.

4. In churches where blended worship is practised and two clear stylistic distinctions of hymns and choruses are maintained and performed distinctly, the leadership is perpetuating the illusion that the borders of the styles are clear. The label "hymns" does not take into account the diversity of genres within the hymnal: for example, various kinds of hymns, gospel songs, spirituals, chants, carols, choruses, hymn tunes that are ethnic folk songs, rounds and so on. Nor does performing them with static authenticity – piano and organ – allow for the breadth of possibilities for rendering these with a more nuanced stylistic authenticity. Hymns can be treated in diverse ways: for example, the use of a variety of accompanying instruments suitable to the more closely defined genre, congregational singing as a concertato with a choir or small group, singing without any accompaniment, call and response, and so on.

   Likewise, Worship Teams with their guitar-based approach have much potential for branching out from the repertoire found in the commercial Praise and Worship category into authentic presentations of other styles of song known within the larger popular culture and world-wide Christianity: for example, folk song forms from other Christian traditions, the material published by the Iona

Community in Scotland, Taizé material from France, and even the choruses and folk tunes found in the hymnal.

5. Confining congregational song to only what is in the local hymnal and a sampling of the Praise and Worship repertoire is to stay within the present taste and expectations of the congregation – a musical authenticity based on the status quo. It also limits the potential of the communal expression and experience, not to mention the musical imagination of the leader-musicians who serve. If the categories of traditional and contemporary (although inadequately construed) were stretched, what is now locally authentic worship music would be forced to go beyond the realm of self-referential taste and narrow preferences of a multi-generational congregation to include a repertoire that acknowledges the multi-cultural and international nature of Christianity and its various worship expressions.

   More broadly representative collections are found in many non-evangelical hymnals used in other Protestant denominations. However, evangelicals are rooted theologically in a personal experience of God that is reflected in their historic hymnody and present day congregational song. Therefore they will need to enlarge their practical theology and ecclesiology to authentically expand their songs of worship from the personal-local and intentionally embrace the collective and global experience that is Christ's Church Universal and his Body Multicultural. And this picture of the church is

increasingly becoming the reality in North America.

Blended worship is a philosophical and cultural paradigm that values and promotes the singing voice of people in worship and the celebration of musical difference. If it can maintain and develop its seminal principle of inclusiveness, multi-style intergenerational worship singing can be a significant way forward to embracing an increasingly multi-cultural society. Within its practices is great potential for experimentation, enabling Christian congregational singing to evolve in many directions. But whatever the future holds, there is no doubt that singing in Christian churches has been changed and will continue to change as cultural forces impact the worship practices of the church.

References

Anton, C. (2001). *Selfhood and authenticity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Augustine. (1997). *The confessions* (M. Boulding, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.

Barthes, R. (1985). *The responsibility of forms: Critical essays on music, art and representation* (R. Howard, Trans.). New York: Hill and Wang.

Bell, C. (1997). *Ritual: Perspectives and dimensions*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bellah, R. N. (Ed.). (1996). *Habits of the heart; individualism and commitment in American life: updated edition with a new introduction*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Berger, H. M. (1999). *Metal, rock and jazz: Perception and the phenomenology of musical experience*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Bergler, T. E. (2004). "I found my thrill": The Youth for Christ movement and American congregational singing, 1940 -1970. In R. J. Mouw & M. A. Noll (Eds.), *Wonderful words of life: Hymns in American protestant history and theology* (pp. 123-149). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Best, H. M. (2003). *Unceasing worship: Biblical perspectives on worship and the arts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Bibby, R. W. (1995). *The Bibby report*. Toronto: Stoddart.

Bibby, R. W. (2002). *Restless gods: The renaissance of religion in Canada*. Toronto: Stoddart.

Blacking, J. (1982). The structure of musical discourse: The problem of the song text [Electronic version]. *Yearbook for Traditional Music, 14*(1982), 15-23.

Booth, M. (1981). *The experience of songs*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Bresler, L. (1995). Ethnography, phenomenology and action research in music education. Retrieved February 19, 2008, from http://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=enus&q=Ethnography,+Phenomenology+and+Action+Research+in+Music+Education&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8

Brown, F. B. (2000). *Good taste, bad taste, and Christian taste: Aesthetics in religious life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Browne, B. (2001). Evangelical, eh? *Faith Today, January/February 2001,* 44-46.

Butt, J. (2004). Authenticity. Retrieved October 18, 2004, from http://www.grovemusic.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca

Carroll, J. W., & Roof, W. C. (2002). *Bridging divided worlds: Generational cultures in congregations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clapp, R. (2002). On the Making of Kings and Christians. In T. E. Johnson (Ed.), *The conviction of things unseen: Worship and ministry in the 21st century* (pp. 109-122). Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Cone, E. T. (1974). *The composers voice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Conway, M. L. (2006). Worship music: Maintaining dynamic tension [Electronic version]. *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry, 7*, 132-159.

Crafts, S. D., Cavicchi, D., & Keil, C. (1993). *My music*. Hanover, NH: Weslyan University Press.

Davis, E. S. (1997). *The multi-faceted phenomenon of congregational song: An interdisciplinary exploration of interpretive influences.* Unpublished Doctor of Church Music, The Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA.

Dawn, M. J. (1995). *Reaching out without dumbing down: A theology of worship for the turn-of-the-century culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Dawn, M. J. (1999). *A royal "waste" of time: The splendor of worshiping God and being church for the world*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Day, T. (1990). *Why Catholics can't sing: The culture of Catholicism and the triumph of bad taste*. New York: Crossroads.

Derrida, J. (2003). Following theory. In M. Payne & J. Schad (Eds.), *life.after.theory* (pp. 1-51). London: Continuum.

Diener, S. (2001, March 22). What happens when you sing? *The Weather Vane* Retrieved March 6, 2007, from http://weathervane.emu.edu/index.php?v=47&n=19&s=10

Dueck, J. M. (2003). *An ethnographic study of the musical practices of three Edmonton Mennonite churches.* Unpublished PhD. dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Fetke, T. (Ed.). (1986). *The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration*. Waco, TX: Word Music.

Frith, S. (1981). *Sound effects: Youth, leisure and the politics of rock 'n' roll*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Frith, S. (1996a). Music and identity. In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (pp. 108-127). London: Sage.

Frith, S. (1996b). *Performing rites*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Godlovitch, S. (1998). *Musical performance: a philosophical study*. London: Routledge.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books.

Hamilton, M. S. (1999, July 12). The triumph of the praise songs; how guitars beat out the organ in the worship wars. *Christianity Today, 48,* 29-35.

Hamilton, M. S. (2001, July). A generation changes North American hymnody. *Hymn, 52,* 11-21.

Heidegger, M. (1971). *Poetry, language, thought*. New York: Harper and Row.

Hoad, T. F. (Ed.). (1996). *The concise Oxford dictionary of English etymology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hull, K. R. (2002, January). Text, music and meaning in congregational singing. *The Hymn, 53,* 14-25.

Hustad, D. (1993). *Jubilate II: Church music in worship and renewal*. Carol Stream, IL: Hope Publishing Company.

Hustad, D. (1998). *True worship: Reclaiming the wonder and majesty*. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers.

Ihde, D. (1976). *Listening and voice: A phenomenology of sound*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

James, W. (1902). *The varieties of religious experience*. New York: New American Library.

Kee, K. (2004). Marketing the gospel: Music in English-Canadian protestant revivalism, 1884 -1957. In R. J. Mouw & M. A. Noll (Eds.), *Wonderful words of life: Hymns in American protestant history and theology* (pp. 96-122). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Kendon, A. (2004). *Gesture: Visible action as utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kierkegaard, S. (1948). *Purity of heart is to will one thing: Spiritual preparation for the office of confession* (D. V. Steere, Trans.). New York: Harper & Brothers.

Kropf, M., & Nafziger, K. (2001). *Singing: A Mennonite voice*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.

LaRueJr, J. C. (2001, September 26). Worship music: The latest research. Retrieved April 7, 2004, from http://www.christianitytoday.com/leaders/newsletter/2001/cln10926.html

LaRueJr, J. C. (2004). Worship music trends: Current research data on churches. Retrieved July 8, 2004, from http://www.christianitytoday.com/yc/2004/004/7.64.html

Lawrence, J. E., & Ferguson, J. A. (1981). *A musician's guide to church music*. New York: The Pilgrim Press.

Liesch, B. (2001). *The new worship: Straight talk on music and the church* (expanded ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Marini, S. (2003). *Sacred song in America: Religion, music and public culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Mark, T. C. (1981). Philosophy of piano playing: Reflections on the concept of performance. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 41*(3), 299-324.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Morgenthaler, S. (1995). *Worship evangelism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Myers, H. (Ed.). (1992). *Ethnomusicology: An introduction*. New York: W.W.Norton & Company.

Negus, K. (1996). *Popular music in theory: An introduction*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Noll, M. A. (1994). *The scandal of the evangelical mind*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Pearsall, J., & Trumble, B. (Eds.). (1996). *The Oxford English reference dictionary, second edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Percy, M. (1997). Sweet rapture: Subliminal eroticism in contemporary charismatic worship [Electronic version]. *Theology and Sexuality, 6*, 71-106.

Plessner, H. (1970). *Laughing and crying: A study of the limits of human behavior* (J. S. Churchill & M. Grene, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Post, J. C. (Ed.). (2006). *Ethnomusicology: A contemporary reader*. New York: Routledge.

Posterski, D. (2002). Spiritual styles = leadership challenges. *Envision, 2*, 2-9.

Postman, N. (1993). *Technopoly: The surrender of culture to technology*. New York: Vintage Books.

Price, D. E. (2003, 22 March). Third Day further expanding boundaries of praise [Electronic version]. *Billboard, 115*, 14.

Redman, R. (2002). *The great worship awakening: Singing a new song in the postmodern church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ricoeur, P. (1991). Appropriation. In M. Valdes (Ed.), *A Ricoeur reader: reflection and imagination* (pp. 87-98). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Romanowski, W. D. (2000). Evangelicals and popular music: The contemporary Christian music industry. In R. K. Forman & J. H. Mahan (Eds.), *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (pp. 103-124). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Schafer, R. M. (1969). *The new soundscape*`. Toronto: Clark & Cruickshank.

Schrag, C. O. (1986). *Communicative praxis and the space of subjectivity*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Schutz, A. (1964). Making music together: A study in social relationship. In A. Brodersen (Ed.), *Collected papers II: Studies in social theory* (pp. 159-178). The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff.

Shepherd, J., Virden, P., Vullimay, G., & Wishart, T. (1977). *Whose music? A sociology of musical languages*. London: Latimer.

Slough, R. J. (1996). "Let every tongue by art refined, mingle its softest notes with mine:" An exploration of hymn-singing events and dimensions of knowing. In M.

B. Aune & V. DeMarinis (Eds.), *Religious and social ritual: Interdisciplinary explorations* (pp. 175-206). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stackhouse, J. G. (2005). Who's afraid of evangelicals? Retrieved September 15, 2005, from http://www.faithtoday.ca/article_viewer.asp?Article_ID=162

Statistics Canada/Analysis Series/Religions in Canada. (2001). Retrieved September 18, 2006, from http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/rel/canada.cfm

Stowe, D. W. (2004). *How sweet the sound: Music in the spiritual lives of Americans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, C. (1991). *The malaise of modernity*. Concord, ON: Anansi Press.

Towns, E. (1997). *Putting and end to the worship wars*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Tresidder, J. (1997). *Dictionary of symbols: An illustrated guide to traditional images, icons, and emblems*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Trudgill, P. (1983). Acts of conflicting identity: The sociolinguistics of British pop-song pronunciation. In P. Trudgill (Ed.), *On dialect: Social and geographical perspectives* (pp. 141-160). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Van Ginkel, A. (2003a). Church and faith trends. Retrieved January 9, 2004, from http://www.christianity.ca/church/leadership/2003/12.003.html

Van Ginkel, A. (2003b). Evangelical beliefs and practises: A summary of the 2003 Ipsos-Reid survey results. Retrieved September 15, 2006, from http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/resources/full_list.asp?topic_ID=20

van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2 ed.). London, ON: The Althouse Press.

Vaughn, B. (1996). Gospel songs and evangelical hymnody: Evaluation and reconsideration. *The American Organist, 30*(5), 64-68.

Viladesau, R. (2000). *Theology and the arts: Encountering God through music, art and rhetoric*. New York: Paulist Press.

Ward, P. (2005). *Selling worship: How what we sing has changed the church*. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press.

Webber, R. (2004). The crisis of evangelical worship: Authentic worship in a changing world. In T. Dearborn & S. Coll (Eds.), *Worship at the next level*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Wells, D. F. (1993). *No place for truth or whatever happened to evangelical theology?* Grand Rapids, MI: William B, Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Wesley, J. (1773). *Sacred melody or a choice collection of psalm and hymn tunes, with a short introduction.* Bristol.

Westermeyer, P. (1998). *Te deum: The church and music*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Witvliet, J. D. (1997, May 2000). The blessing and bane of the North American megachurch: Implications for twenty-first century congregational song. *The American Organist, 34,* 50-56.

Wren, B. (2000). *Praying twice: The music and words of congregational song.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

York, T. W. (2003). *America's worship wars*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

Zuckerkandl, V. (1973). *Man the musician* (N. Guterman, Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Appendices

Ethics Review

The following sections constitute my submission to the Ethics Committee before beginning research. The letter to Christian Copyright Licensing International was not used as the Church Board did not grant permission for videotaping.

Overview of research project

Purpose of research

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the experience of congregational singing within the context of a multi-generational, Canadian, protestant, evangelical church: the meanings that people bring to and derive from this activity. The content and execution of Sunday morning services in this particular kind of church has changed dramatically during the last decade. It seems to be based on many assumptions concerning musical style, preference, personal and cultural relevance. The changes that have occurred have generated widespread discussion and in many cases, contention and serious division among church members.

My research interest is in gaining an understanding of how the new regime of song as well as the more traditional hymnody are experienced by a variety of people within an evangelical, multi-generational faith community

Significance of research

Community song is a significant part of the faith-based activity of church going people. Every Sunday, millions of Christians across North America gather and sing their faith. What is sung, how it is sung, why and when it is sung; all these considerations are infused with personal and cultural values and significances.

However, within the Canadian Protestant Evangelical tradition, this part of faith-based activity has been radically altered in the last ten to fifteen years resulting in discontent and dislocation among some congregants and great rejoicing among others. New songs that are characterized by popular styles of text, music and instrumentation, (guitars, electronic keyboard and drums) have in many cases superceded the traditional chorale style hymns and 19c revivalist songs accompanied by organ and piano. In many cases, hymnbooks have been replaced by projection of text, and choirs have disappeared, giving way to self-sufficient, amplified, small vocal ensembles "fronting the band."

It is hoped that through in-depth phenomenological and ethnomusicological research, primarily focusing on the “ordinary” singers in a congregational setting, a better

understanding is produced of the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from singing in worship services. Subsequently, some of the tensions that have resulted from changes in music and worship style may be better understood, alleviated or avoided.

Method of research

In order to understand the singing experience, qualitative research using hermeneutic phenomenological concepts/methods will be the most suitable. This branch of human science attempts to give a "direct description of our experience as it is" (Merleau-Ponty: 1962, p. vii). Phenomenology engages with the pre-reflective human world; the primary, sensory experience and the significances of it. Lived experience descriptions form the core of the data required for this type of investigation. I will be gathering these through interviews, as outlined below, and through written anecdotes by participants.

The experience of singing together is at once personal and communal and so, a combination of phenomenological and ethnomusicological methods will be used. The choice of song material - "what" is to be sung - is not in the hands of the major participants, the congregation. Indeed, it might not even be within the power of any musician to decide. Certainly, the philosophical decisions that have set the stylistic course for the music – "why" "what" is to be sung - have been made by someone at some time. A local church has clear leadership structures, roles, and an ongoing social dynamic that is local and unique as well as broadly representative. It is a "bounded system," perhaps even a sub-culture with its own constituent rules and behaviors. Ethnographic and ethnomusicological study of the church community will explicate the surrounding, immediate musical/cultural context of the congregational singer, as well as enable the discovery of the processes that have created the specific occasion for worship, with its specific song material that each congregant experiences. To this end, I will also be observing and recording worship activity and rehearsals for song accompaniment, gathering church publications such as weekly worship bulletins, records of songs sung, copies of the songs sung and other pertinent material generally available to all.

Involvement of human participants

This project will be conducted at a specific local church community that is multi-generational. To provide a wider view of singing contexts and potentially a contrasting perspective, some college students, of legal age, currently attending a Christian University College will also be invited to be participants. Individuals, including any under aged youth, will be interviewed one on one and asked to recall significant experiences of singing while in a congregational setting. In lieu of an interview, written anecdotes will be solicited. In the case of under aged youth, permission must be granted by a parent or guardian and the interview will be conducted in a place of mutual convenience, within view of other adults, preferably in the actual presence of another adult.

All participants will understand that their involvement will be limited to thirty or forty minutes of conversational interview, and that they have the option to curtail or terminate their participation at any time.

Decision making members of the church will also be interviewed in order to understand the processes involved in the formulation of the general style of worship

activity in which the congregation engages, as well as the ongoing decisions that affect the specifics for each weekly service.

Participants, including the church board, will be given the opportunity to see how any interview or anecdotal material will be integrated into the study, and will have the chance to request revisions, deletions and other changes to their transcript or written material in this context. Upon completion of the research project and its attendant writing, any remaining record of interviews or written stories will be destroyed or erased.

Use of Recordings

To enable the retention of exact vocabulary and subtle detail, interviews will be tape-recorded and later transcribed. Participants will be informed of this in advance of the interview. This detail is included in the required consent letter.

Singing is a very physical activity and worship has become increasingly expressed in bodily terms in the "contemporary" style. I will seek permission to discreetly videotape the congregation during several services. These videotapes are necessary to enable reflective study of the physical aspects of singing e.g. hand gestures, body movement, and general physical "attitude" in relation to music. Permission must be granted by the church governing council in order to make any recordings. Legally, Christian Copyright Licensing International must also be consulted. This agency licenses churches to be able to reprint/project/arrange/record (limited) copyrighted congregational song material, which is all of that called "contemporary." I anticipate that conditions for the use of this recorded material will be partly determined by the church board and CCLI. I will make the guarantee that only my research advisor and I will be privy to the recorded material, and it will be kept in a locked cabinet otherwise. After all of the research writing is completed, the recordings will be destroyed or erased.

Procedures for compliance with the U of A standards

1. **How will you explain the purpose and nature of your research to prospective participants?**

An information letter (attached) will be given to all volunteer participants. This document outlines the purpose of the study as well as the interview process. It also clearly states that they may at any time curtail or withdraw their participation in the study. They will also be given the opportunity to asses how any interview or anecdotal material will be integrated into the study, and will have the chance to request revisions, deletions and other changes in this context.

2. **(a) What steps will you take to obtain the free and informed consent of the participants?**

A consent form will be provided for signature by the participants and the researcher. It outlines all of the conditions of the study, participant involvement, and a statement of the

use of the material in the context of the dissertation and any resulting written publications.

(b) Are there limited and/or temporary exceptions to the general requirements for full disclosure of information? If yes, (i) please describe the exception(s) (ii) justify the need for the exception(s), and (iii) explain the provisions for debriefing participants.

No

(c) Are there any circumstances which could compromise the voluntary consent of participants (e.g., incentives, captive populations, second relationship)? If yes, how will theses circumstances be dealt with?

In the case of college student participants, some may be enrolled in a course that I teach. If this is so, then a paragraph will be added to the Covering Letter and Consent Form stating that their participation or non-participation is irrelevant to their work in my course.

3. **How will you provide opportunities for your participants to exercise the right to opt out without penalty, harm or loss of promised benefit**?

It is clearly stated in the Covering Letter and Consent form that participants are free to curtail or terminate their voluntary participation at any time. As there are no incentives of rewards offered, no harm or loss will occur.

4. **How will you address anonymity and confidentiality issues?**

The participants will be informed, both in the Covering Letter and Consent Form that the content of discussions/interviews or any written submission will be held in strict confidence and will only be used for research purposes and for writing based on the research. If there are any personal references in the conversation or anecdote, any place names or other identifying data, they will be changed. Participant anonymity will be assured by the use of a pseudonym. Participants will be given the opportunity to see how any interview or anecdotal material will be integrated into the study, and will have the chance to request revisions, deletions and other changes in this context. Upon completion of the research project and its attendant writing, any remaining record, written or recorded, of the interviews or written stories will be destroyed or erased. All written and recorded information will be kept in a locked cabinet when not in use.

5. **Will there be any risk, threat or harm to the participants or to others? If yes, (a) please elaborate and (b) how will you minimize the risk, threat or harm?**

No

6. **How will you provide for security of the data during the study and for a minimum of 5 years thereafter?**

Assurance is given to the participants that I, as the researcher and my graduate advisor Max van Manen, will be the only ones to have access to the interview recordings, written anecdotes and video recordings. These will all be stored in a locked cabinet when not in use.

7. **If you involve research assistants and /or transcribers in your research, how will you ensure that they comply with the Standards?**

N/A

8. **Please describe any other procedures relevant to complying with the Standards?**

Covering letter to participants

January, 2003

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my dissertation research project investigating the experience of congregational singing. The purpose of this study is to better understand the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from singing in worship services. I will be asking you to recall significant experiences related to singing within the context of a congregation. This can be a recent, or a more distant memory. It could be positive or not so positive, as long as it occurred as a result of your singing with the congregation of a church. Your recalling of familiar lived experiences is an important part of the qualitative inquiry that will be used in this study. I am most grateful for your input, as without it, such material would be difficult to obtain.

As a volunteer, you will be asked to participate in a personal interview of about 30 to 40 minutes. The format will be conversational in nature and relatively unstructured to allow you to tell your singing story. I will also likely engage you in conversation that relates to the research topic of congregational song. With your permission, I will tape-record the interview and later transcribe it. If you are more comfortable writing a suitable anecdote, this can be submitted instead of an interview.

Please feel assured that the content of our discussion or any written submission will be held in strict confidence and will only be used for research purposes and for writing based on the research. If there are any personal references in the conversation or anecdote, any place names or other identifying data, they will be changed. Your anonymity as a participant is assured by the use of a pseudonym. You will be given the opportunity to see how any interview or anecdotal material will be integrated into the study, and will have the chance to request revisions, deletions and other changes in this context. Upon completion of the research project and its attendant writing, any remaining record of the interview or written stories will be destroyed or erased.

If you have any questions, please contact me by phone at 780-437-2731 or email at gadnams@telusplanet.net

Thank you again for your valuable participation in the project. I trust that its findings will be helpful in future worship/musical activity and decision-making.

Research consent form

Singing Together: A phenomenological and ethnomusicological study of the experience of congregational singing in the present day, Christian, protestant, evangelical tradition.

I (the undersigned) volunteer to participate in this research study of congregational singing. The purpose of this study is to better understand the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from congregational singing in worship services.

In agreeing to participate, I understand that my involvement will not exceed the time specified in the accompanying Covering Letter to Participants and that I am free to discontinue or limit my participation in the project at any time. I understand that tape recordings will be made of the interview. I understand that I may submit a written anecdote instead of an interview. I understand that I will be able to review and request changes/deletions to the way this material is integrated into the dissertation, and that no form of deception will be involved in the interview or in the study as a whole.

I have been assured by Gordon Adnams that the content of my interview or written anecdote will be used for research purposes only and will remain strictly confidential. I further understand that only he as the researcher in this project and his graduate advisor, Max van Manen, will have access to this information. I understand that the content from the research data (stories, anecdotes, interpretations) may be used for writing, publication and presentations, but only after my name and any identifying references have been changed to ensure anonymity. I further understand that upon completion of the study and attendant publication(s), all written and tape recorded accounts of my interview will be erased or destroyed.

In witness of the above, I affix my signature

Participant	Researcher
Signed_____	Signed_____
Date_____	Date_____

Under-age participant covering letter

January, 2003

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Thank you for your willingness to having your child participate in my dissertation research project investigating the experience of congregational singing. The purpose of this study is to better understand the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from singing in worship services. I will be asking your child to recall significant experiences related to singing within the context of a congregation. This can be a recent, or a more distant memory. It could be positive or not so positive, as long as it occurred as a result of singing with a congregation or other members of a church. Recalling of familiar lived experiences is an important part of the qualitative inquiry that will be used in this study. I am most grateful for your child's input, as without it, such material would be difficult to obtain.

As a volunteer, your child will be asked to participate in a personal interview of about thirty to forty minutes. The interview will be conducted in a place mutually agreed upon by you, the parent and me as the researcher. You may be present at the interview if you wish. The format will be conversational in nature and relatively unstructured to allow your child to tell his/her singing story. A written anecdote can be submitted instead of an interview. I will also likely engage your child in conversation that relates to the research topic of congregational song. With your permission, I will tape-record the interview and later transcribe it.

Please feel assured that the content of our discussion or the written anecdote will be held in strict confidence and will only be used for research purposes and for writing based on the research. If there are any personal references in the conversation or story, any place names or other identifying data, they will be changed. Your child's anonymity as a participant is assured by the use of a pseudonym. You and your child will be given the opportunity to see how any interview or anecdotal material will be integrated into the study, and you will have the chance to request revisions, deletions and other changes in this context. Upon completion of the research project and its attendant writing, any remaining record of the interview or written submission will be destroyed or erased.

If you have any questions, please contact me by phone at 780-437-2731 or email at gadnams@telusplanet.net

Thank you again for your child's valuable participation in the project. I trust that its findings will be helpful in future worship/musical activity and decision-making.

Under–age participant research consent form

Singing Together: A phenomenological and ethnomusicological study of the experience of congregational singing in the present day, Christian, protestant, evangelical tradition.

I (the undersigned) agree to allow my child to participate in this research study of congregational singing. The purpose of this study is to better understand the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from derived from congregational singing in worship services.

In consenting to my child's participation, I understand that my child's involvement will not exceed the time specified in the accompanying Covering Letter to Under-aged Participants and that I am free to discontinue or limit my child's participation in the project at any time. I understand that tape recordings will be made of the interview. I understand that my child may submit a written anecdote instead of an interview. I understand that we will be able to review and request changes/deletions to the way this material is integrated into the dissertation, and also that no form of deception will be involved in the interview or in the study as a whole.

I have been assured by Gordon Adnams that the content of my child's interview or written anecdote will be used for research purposes only and will remain strictly confidential. I further understand that only he as the researcher in this project and his graduate advisor, Max van Manen, will have access to this information. I understand that the content from the research data (stories, anecdotes, interpretations) may be used for writing, publication and presentations, but only after my child's name and any identifying references have been changed to ensure anonymity. I further understand that upon completion of the study and attendant publication(s), all written and tape recorded accounts of my child's interview will be erased or destroyed.

In witness of the above I affix my signature

Parent or guardian	Child	Researcher
Signed_____	Signed_____	Signed_____
Date_____	Date_____	Date_____

Covering letter to the church board

January, 2003

Dear members of the Church Board

I am currently engaged in a PhD. dissertation research project investigating the experience of congregational singing. The purpose of this study is to better understand the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from congregational singing in worship services.

I write to ask your permission to approach members of your congregation, informing them of an opportunity to voluntarily participate in this project. Volunteers will be asked to recall significant experiences related to singing within the context of a congregation. This can be a recent, or a more distant memory. It could be positive or not so positive, as long as it occurred as a result of singing with the congregation of a church. This recalling of familiar lived experiences is an important part of the qualitative inquiry that will be used in this study.

The individual volunteers will be asked to participate in a personal interview of about 30 to 40 minutes. The format will be conversational in nature, relatively unstructured to allow them to tell their singing story. I will also likely engage them in conversation that relates to the research topic of congregational song. With their permission, I will tape-record the interview and later transcribe it. Each participant will be required to sign a consent form (attached) which outlines all of the research conditions as well as their right to opt out of the project at any time.

I would also like to interview some of the leaders of the church who are responsible for decision making in regards to congregational song.

As well, I would like to attend some of the rehearsals that are specifically for accompanying congregational singing on a Sunday and to talk with the musicians.

Please be assured that the content of all interviews will be held in strict confidence and will only be used for research purposes and for writing based on the research. If there are any personal references in the conversation, any place names or other identifying data, they will be changed. The anonymity of each participant is assured by the use of a pseudonym. Participants will be given the opportunity to see how any interview material will be integrated into the study, and will have the chance to request revisions, deletions and other changes in this context. Upon completion of the research project and its attendant writing, any remaining record of the interview will be destroyed or erased.

All participants and parents of under aged volunteers will be required to sign a consent form (attached) that outlines all of the research conditions as well as their right to opt out of the project at any time.

In addition, I ask your permission to video tape the congregation during two services with the intention of capturing the physical gestures and attitudes displayed during congregational singing. Every effort will be made to conceal the camera. The video recording will be treated with the same safeguards as the audio recordings of the interviews. Obviously, anonymity is not assured with the use of video recording. My research advisor, Max van Manen and I will be the only ones to view the tape, and when not in use, it will be kept in a locked cabinet. After the project and the writing is complete, it will be erased. Because video recording includes sound, I will also be approaching Christian Copyright Licensing International to seek their permission.

A consent document is attached outlining all actions and conditions that require your consent as the legal governing body of the church.

If you have any questions, please contact me by phone at 780-437-2731 or email at gadnams@telusplanet.net

Thank you again for considering these requests. I trust that the results of this project will be helpful in future worship/musical activity and decision making within the wider Christian church community.

Church board research consent form

Singing Together: A phenomenological and ethnomusicological study of the experience of congregational singing in the present day, Christian, protestant, evangelical tradition.

We, the Board of ----------church do grant permission for Gordon Adnams to make known the opportunity to participate in this research study of congregational singing. The purpose of this study is to better understand the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from congregational singing in worship services.

We understand that each volunteer, in agreeing to participate will be required to sign a consent form outlining the conditions of participation and the freedom to discontinue or limit their participation in the project at any time. We understand that tape recordings will be made of the interviews. We understand that participants and members of this board will be able to review and request changes/deletions to the way interview or written anecdotes and other gathered material is integrated into the dissertation, and also that no form of deception will be involved in the interview or in the study as a whole.

We do also grant permission for video recordings to be made of two worship services, contingent upon the permission and conditions set out by Christian Copyright Licensing International.

We have been assured by Gordon Adnams that the content of all interviews or written anecdotes and video recordings will be used for research purposes only and will remain strictly confidential. We further understand that only he as the researcher in this project and his graduate advisor, Max van Manen, will have access to this information. We understand that the content from the research data (stories, anecdotes, and interpretations) may be used for writing, publication and presentations, but only after all names and any identifying references have been changed to ensure anonymity. We further understand that upon completion of the study and attendant publication(s), all written, audio and video tape recorded accounts will be erased or destroyed.

In witness of the above I affix my signature

Chair of the Board	Researcher
Signed_____	Signed_____
Date_____	Date_____

Letter to Christian Copyright Licensing International

Christian Copyright Licensing International
17201 NE Sacramento Street
Portland OR 97230
U.S.A.

January 2003

To Whom It May Concern:

I am currently engaged in a PhD. dissertation research project investigating the experience of congregational singing. The purpose of this study is to better understand the personal and corporate meanings brought to and derived from congregational singing in worship services.

I wish to make videotapes of a congregation as they sing in worship. I write to you to inquire as to my status as a researcher and that of this recording activity. Can it be accomplished within the conditions of the CCLI license held by a local church or is a special license required for me?

Singing is a very physical activity and worship has become increasingly expressed in bodily terms in the "contemporary" style. Videotapes of the congregation are necessary to enable reflective study of the physical aspects of singing e.g. hand gestures, body movement, and general physical "attitude" in relation to music.

I will seek permission from the local church governing council in order to make these recordings. I anticipate that conditions for the use of this recorded material will be determined by the concerns of the church board and CCLI, as well as the Ethics Review Board of the University of Alberta. I make the guarantee that only my research advisor and I will be privy to the recorded material, and it will be kept in a locked cabinet otherwise. After all of the research writing is completed, it will be destroyed or erased.

Your consideration of this matter is greatly appreciated. I look forward to receiving your comments at your earliest convenience

Yours truly,

Interview questions and procedures

Singer interviewees: The volunteer participants will be asked, in an informal, semi-structured interview, questions intended to elicit a description of a lived experience; a specific, memorable time when singing in church.

Other interviewees: When talking to the volunteers who are accompanying musicians or other musical leaders, I will pursue a line of questioning designed to discover the musical decision-making processes that precede congregational singing and therefore provide the content and some of the context for the singing. This may take the form of a group conversation (e.g. with musicians at a "band" rehearsal) or an individual conversation/interview (e.g. with the pastor or a board member responsible for worship services).

Instruction for a lived experience description:

Can you recall a particular instance when you were really "into" singing a congregational song in church?

More detailed questions or prompts:

- What was this like from the "inside?"
- Can you recall specifics of this situation?
- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- Did you experience any physical interaction with the song?
- What was happening around you?
- How did you interact with other people's involvement? Other singers in the congregation? Accompanying musicians? Musical leader?

Can you recall a time when you were singing, that you really would rather NOT be singing?

More detailed questions or prompts:

- How did you feel at this time?
- Can you recall specifics of this situation?
- What happened?
- What did you do?
- Did you have any outward, physical manifestations at this time?
- What was happening around you?
- How did you interact with other people's involvement? Other singers or non/singers in the congregation? Accompanying musicians? Musical leader?

Questions to guide conversations with musical leaders.

Who chooses the songs for the congregation to sing?

- Why were these songs chosen for this particular service?

- Is there significance to the order in which the songs will be sung?

Who makes the major musical decisions – e.g. tempo, form, volume, balance, instrumentation, personnel - for the accompaniment?

- Are there organizational structures or policies that guide any of these choices?

What considerations were given to the congregation when making repertoire and other musical choices?

The Interviewees

In the course of this research, I conducted a total of 30 semi-structured interviews, most of them lasting at least 30 minutes, many longer than an hour. The four musical decision-makers from Eldridge Baptist Church were extensively interviewed and supplied many of the facts necessary for understanding how congregational singing comes about at Eldridge. The other 26 interviews were used primarily to yield phenomenological insights. These included 11members of Eldridge whose conversations included facts and observations that contributed to the ethnography. The other 15 interviewees were college students and adults of various ages from other evangelical churches.